

**BC's Economic Recovery Plan:
UBCIC Recommendations**

Submission to: Government of BC

Via:

July 15, 2020



Prepared by:

The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

“The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs strengthens Indigenous Nations to assert and implement their Aboriginal Title, Rights, Treaty Rights and Right of Self-Determination as Peoples. The UBCIC works collectively amongst Indigenous Nations in B.C., providing a cohesive voice in support of Indigenous Nations and communities.”

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ABOUT UBCIC AND COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new and emergent challenges on an unprecedented scale, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) has become an active and integral participant, intermediary, and advocate in the Province's response to the public health crisis. The work, advocacy, and roles the UBCIC has assumed intersect with many areas and sectors of governance; the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing systemic barriers to Indigenous wellbeing, including those related to health care, employment, housing, justice, and gendered violence.

The UBCIC has worked closely with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Province and, as a member organization of the First Nations Leadership Council, leveraged its collaborative working partnership with the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) and the First Nations Summit (FNS) to advance priority issues and interests on behalf of First Nations. The UBCIC has helped develop coordinated approaches to the challenges that the pandemic has intensified and continues to provide a cohesive voice in support of Indigenous communities living in urban, rural, and remote locations who require aid and resources for their unique needs.

INTRODUCTION

The Province has implemented [BC's Restart Plan](#) and, as of June 22, 2020, is in Phase 3 of its phased approach to mitigating and recovering from the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Province issued its [Building BC's Recovery, Together](#) discussion paper on June 17, 2020, which called for feedback and ideas from individuals and communities on how to recover from the economic fallout of the pandemic by strengthening BC's business and health care sectors, while addressing BC's growing job security concerns. As BC continues to move forward in its recovery and restart plans, it is imperative that First Nations concerns inform and shape BC's road to recovery. **The treatment of Indigenous peoples throughout the pandemic was and is beset by systemic inequities, discrimination, and fragmented government aid and action. BC's plans for economic recovery must address these shortcomings, rectify the social impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous people, and set the stage for further advancement and support for Indigenous Title and Rights fulfillment. It is unacceptable to put forward an economic recovery plan that does not account for the institutionalized racism and systemic inequalities that makes responding to and recovering from COVID-19 more challenging and complex for Indigenous communities, and without a transparent and equitable way for all First Nations to be aware of opportunities to apply for any funding the Province has available for recovery.**

While the global health community has lauded the Province for rapidly flattening the curve of COVID-19 cases, the autonomous actions of First Nations to implement isolation protocols and a range of other restrictions to protect their peoples must also be credited. First Nations were leaders in the response, despite the challenges they faced in accessing comprehensive and adequately funded supports, resources, and supplies. Those challenges must be addressed in this period of 'recovery'.

It has been an uphill battle for Indigenous communities, particularly those that are remote, to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), widespread rapid-testing kits, culturally safe contact tracing, and proper screening methods to prevent travelers compromising the health of their Elders and community members. COVID-19 has also enabled the provincial government to defer critical legislation and action; the implementation of the National Action Plan to on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has been delayed, and BC's commitment to implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* contrasts with legislation developed in isolation of Indigenous peoples such as Bill 17 and Bill 22. In the face of escalating racism, including allegations that health care staff across BC have been engaging in unethical and racist "[blood-alcohol guessing games](#)" involving Indigenous patients, it is critical that the Province explicitly dedicate and invest new resources into supporting Indigenous communities and educating the public.

The intersecting forms of discrimination that COVID-19 intensified – including hostility towards Asian Canadians, anti-Indigenous racism, and gender-based violence – underscore how the current landscape of Crown-Indigenous relations in the Province is still very shaped and defined by white supremacist frameworks and colonial structures. Given the unpredictable trajectory of the pandemic, and the continued work needed to provide stability and safety to First Nations communities, BC will need a strong recovery plan that not only focuses on recuperating the economy, but on investing in programs, initiatives, and actions that address the social repercussions of COVID-19.

The pandemic has led to increases in lethal drug overdoses, homelessness, unemployment, and human rights violations that all disproportionately impact lower-income groups and racialized communities. BC's economic recovery plans should not be premised on a one-size-fits-all approach that flattens the diverse contexts and needs of First Nations, and only focuses on elevating a specific, privileged subset of the population. BC's economy can only thrive when it advances people equitably, with strong investments in mitigating the impacts of future COVID-19 outbreaks upon Indigenous peoples and their health, livelihoods, and rights.

The following submission contains UBCIC's recommendations and priorities for BC's economic recovery that will help establish a strong framework for advancing the quality of life for Indigenous peoples. It draws upon research and engagement conducted by the UBCIC into the immediate concerns and interests expressed by the UBCIC's membership. Over the course of a month-long data gathering initiative, First Nations across BC have provided the UBCIC with extensive testimonial data attesting to the substantial social and economic impacts of the pandemic and the province's inequitable and uncoordinated response to it. The UBCIC membership is calling for immediate remedies to social injustice and economic insecurity that will advance and protect Indigenous wellbeing.

PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY UBCIC

Consultation and Consent

- Indigenous peoples cannot be excluded from decision-making and planning processes intended to advance the development of economic recovery plans; they face unique circumstances and urgent challenges stemming from longstanding disparities in accessing funding and resources.
 1. At the forefront of BC's economic recovery should be sustained and comprehensive engagement, consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities, organizations, businesses, and leaders. Many First Nation members are employed within industries hit hard by the crisis, including the tourism and retail sectors, and need additional financial support. Indigenous peoples' input and insight are needed to identify priority investments, as well as the initiatives and actions needed to protect and support Indigenous economies and capacity-building.
- The Indigenous Business and Investment Council (IBIC)'s [COVID-19 Indigenous Business Survey](#) was conducted from April 22-29th 2020 and highlighted how Indigenous businesses are disproportionately impacted by the social distancing directives and travel restrictions: 84% are seeing a “drop in revenue, business, or deal flow,” and 89% are anticipating a further “decrease in revenue in the near-term.”
 2. BC's recovery plan needs to be premised on strong engagement with these Indigenous businesses, with specific strategies aimed at bolstering and incentivizing their operations and capital. Indigenous businesses need to be consulted and have the opportunity to contribute to the province's efforts to rectify the economic impacts COVID-19. Their feedback is also crucial in determining whether the emergency business supports introduced by the federal and provincial governments have been effective and successful.

Businesses and Economic Outlook

- Indigenous hospitality and tourism businesses have been hard hit by COVID-19 as they rely heavily on tourists and visitors. 91% have closed or now operate only in a limited capacity.¹ Furthermore, micro-businesses on reserve have limited or no access to mainstream or COVID-relief funding. Many Indigenous businesses have also experienced trouble and frustration determining which relief programs they can access, and how to properly complete applications.
 3. Identify and implement Indigenous-specific long-term economic recovery plans and objectives, including establishing an economic stimulus fund and obtaining federal and

¹ COVID-19 Support to British Columbia First Nations: Highlights of ISC BC Region Comprehensive Outreach - May 12, 2020 (<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:cdf0d834-cd5c-477c-baee-24ff60200893>)

provincial funding and support for Indigenous businesses. As Indigenous businesses operate under different circumstances and conditions than other non-Indigenous companies (many are First Nation-owned, possess lower-collateral/higher-cost financing, and/or are seasonal enterprises), implementing Indigenous-specific supports is vital.

4. Engage with Indigenous businesses and service providers to determine their priorities; create a pathfinding support to navigate and complete applications for funding and programs, and to find resources and information on payment deferral options, business adaptation opportunities, cost-saving strategies, etc.

Quality of Life

- Food insecurity, which is linked to poorer mental and physical health and educational outcomes, has become a [crucial and pressing concern for First Nations communities](#); it was reported in 2017 that 38% of Indigenous people in urban areas aged 18 and older lived in a food insecure household. According to ISC, First Nations' largest expenditures in light of COVID-19 have been in relation to food supplies and security.² Climate change has already impacted access to food in Northern and remote Indigenous communities, and COVID-19 is an added strain on existing challenges to fishing, hunting, harvesting traditional medicine, and the accessibility and production of cultural foods.
5. BC's recovery plan should prioritize food security for Indigenous peoples and contain targeted funding for improving, increasing, and distributing food supplies. As there are no exact, accurate figures on First Nation expenditures related to food security since there is no requirement for financial reporting before year-end, the province should begin compiling and tracking data and feedback from First Nations as to better assess and respond to their food security needs. In addition, the access to and availability of essential items (diapers, toilet paper, medications, baby supplies, etc.) needs to be assessed and improved for First Nations.
 6. Traditional food security must be a unique recovery priority. Through consultation and cooperation with First Nations the sustainability of traditional food sources, depleted through climate crises and mismanagement, can become a pillar of recovery that will have lasting impact for communities. The fragmented approaches to fishing and hunting rights currently employed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and provincial authorities result in recreational access by non-Indigenous peoples being framed as an economic priority superseding traditional food, social, and ceremonial uses in contravention of Indigenous rights. The vitality of traditional food sources is inherently

² COVID-19 Support to British Columbia First Nations: Highlights of ISC BC Region Comprehensive Outreach - May 12, 2020

interdependent with the vitality of First Nations. Economic recovery cannot become a justification for prioritizing sport fishing and recreational hunting at the expense of First Nations' ways of life.

- To better support Indigenous people's job outlooks, connectivity and support for off-reserve members will need to be improved and advanced. With the provision of health care moving largely online due to in-person service provision being halted or limited, Indigenous peoples were at an access disadvantage. Network BC estimates only 25% of Indigenous communities in BC meet basic internet services criteria, preventing many from accessing a wide range of government and health-care services, including the "First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day"³ program that enables members of BC First Nations to make virtual health appointments from home. Furthermore, while the government provided \$75 million in funding for Indigenous organizations providing services to Indigenous peoples in urban centres and off reserve, the development and allocation of funding is based on outdated 2016 census data that may not accurately reflect community demographics and current needs of Indigenous communities
7. BC's recovery plan should aim to increase access to reliable and affordable internet service for Indigenous people working or studying from home and seeking to connect with community members and participate in cultural activities and events that have now moved online.
 8. Establish more comprehensive, stable supports and streamlined processes for assisting First Nations' off-reserve membership who have had to rely on the provision of vouchers, gift cards and/or cash from their Nations for basic necessities, and have been forced to navigate the lengthy and unwieldy process of contacting their Nation for support only then to be redirected to the limited number of ISC funded off-reserve supports.
 9. Although the COVID-19 crisis made it very apparent that Friendship Centres across BC are essential for First Nations people dealing with food insecurity, domestic violence, increased isolation, and mental health issues, they are facing funding and capacity challenges, as well as increased calls for their support from First Nations' rural off-reserve membership. The First Nations Summit and the UBCIC previously supported the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres' (BCAAFC) call for more financial supports as they struggled to accommodate increased requests for their services from both on-reserve and off-reserve membership as a direct result of the pandemic. BC's recovery plan will need to allocate more funding to Friendship Centres and create more supports and services for off-reserve membership. All Indigenous peoples, regardless of whether they live on-reserve, should be given equal and sustained support, and BC will

³ <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-doctor-of-the-day>

need to develop and implement a funding allocation formula that accurately reflects and upholds this principle.

- Indigenous communities, especially rural and remote ones, will face new barriers to accessing education and healthcare service providers due to social distancing and transportation restrictions. Previously, on April 6, 2020, a coalition of northern and coastal First Nations and municipalities sent an [urgent open letter](#) to the Province and Canada asking for support to prevent travel to their communities, but it took over a month for the province to respond. First Nations have had to set up their own checkpoints and prevent tourists and non-residents from entering their territories. Despite domestic travel within BC now allowed by the province, the [Heiltsuk, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Tsilhqot'in nations](#) say the provincial government did not consult them before allowing non-essential travel.
10. BC's recovery plans will have to consider the costs related to renovations enabling social distancing and see the full implementation of its [Rural, Remote, First Nations and Indigenous COVID-19 Response Framework](#); as businesses and sectors re-open, their must be concrete steps taken and formal measures established to consult with First Nations and protect isolated communities and their Elders (who are important, cherished knowledge keepers and language speakers) from non-residents potentially transmitting and spreading the disease in their territories.
 11. The largely unilateral re-opening of provincial parks, and encouragement of travel within the province as an economic recovery strategy jeopardized the security First Nations had been working to build. This is completely unacceptable and inconsistent with the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) Indigenous peoples are entitled to under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. It is insufficient to 'have conversations' with First Nations leaders, or to adopt only an engagement-based measure of consultation. Decisions about non-Indigenous access to First Nations' territory, and related health or security calculations, must be driven by FPIC, and BC's economic recovery model must prioritize Indigenous rights over expediency.
- Job security and economic revitalization is only realized when BC has strong, healthy families who can rely on comprehensive, sustained childcare provision and child welfare supports. COVID-19 has placed additional stress and pressure on families when daycares closed, and thousands lost jobs and income. Many Indigenous families were unable to afford or access daycare, or were unable rely on other family members, especially grandparents, to take care of their children as a result of social distancing and public health orders. A lack of childcare supports is a great impediment to parents seeking employment or continuing to work from home. It should also be noted that the burdens connected to childcare are gendered, with many Indigenous mothers facing financial insecurity alongside the mental and physical challenges of being both caretakers and jobholders.

12. There is still a need to maximize the “\$10 a Day Child Care Plan in BC” and to expand \$10 a day prototype sites across BC. BC’s recovery plan will need to support this and invest in developing and implementing a [publicly-funded and publicly-managed system](#) of child care that includes culturally enriched, quality care for Indigenous children and childcare infrastructure investments
- Women in general are bearing the brunt of the socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19; according to the province’s report they are disproportionately impacted by unemployment with 65% of job losses in the hospitality and food services sectors being represented by women. Indigenous women in particular are also facing increased rates of domestic violence and abuse. Subsequent impacts include increased child protection concerns and child apprehensions. Families who were already separated faced decreased access and connections and the inability to navigate the justice system with court services moving online. A comprehensive and holistic response to ensure child safety, family connections and access to justice must be part of BC’s socioeconomic recovery plan.
 14. The National Action Plan for MMWIG must be immediately implemented. Its implementation necessitates new and increased funding for women’s shelters and crisis centers, and creates more supports related to physical and mental health, culture, education, and safety that will help Indigenous women and girls.
 15. Funding must be allocated to support Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare, including meaningful prevention supports and investments in developing capacity and infrastructure.
 16. A comprehensive review of the child welfare impacts created by COVID-19 must be undertaken, with immediate investments made to ensure Indigenous families are supported to remain together or to be reunited.
 17. Investments in access to justice, including mediations, to immediately rectify the backlog in family court child protection matters should be a priority area of focus.
- The Canadian Human Rights Commission has expressed deep concern over the rise in racism across Canada since the start of pandemic stating: “Minority groups, in particular people of Asian origin, have been the victims of racist taunts, threats and intimidation in public and online, and physical violence.”⁴ While Premier Horgan has issued a solidarity statement and called upon the federal government to initiate a [national anti-racism campaign](#), little has been done by Canada to institute and invest in human rights oversight in its response to COVID-19, and to work with Indigenous peoples to specifically target emergent and acute issues of discrimination. As recently as July 7th 2020, the shísháhlh Nation, based in Sechelt, B.C., reported [racist, anti-Indigenous vandalism](#) which included threats to topple totem poles at a local school. Again,

⁴ <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/statement-racism-response-covid-19-harms-us-all>

provincial and federal ministers issued a [solidarity statement](#), but with no commitments to actually implement concrete anti-racism actions and measures.

18. Investments should be made in establishing independent human rights oversight committees with Indigenous representatives from both urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities. These committee would have mandates to strengthen human rights protection in COVID-19 response strategies, to track and respond to human rights violations associated with COVID-19 response measures, and to make regular recommendations to the government. Provincial and federal funding and support must be readily available to kickstart anti-racist programs and initiatives, with particular attention being paid to the rise in anti-Indigenous racism and the critical need to address and halt it.
19. Fund and invest in having Indigenous knowledge-keepers and relevant human rights representatives take on official advisory roles to advance Indigenous rights and welfare to special committees, emergency task forces, crisis response working groups and other bodies established by Canada to coordinate its response to the pandemic.⁵

Health Care

- Many Northern and remote Indigenous communities have ill-equipped and understaffed health care facilities, and travel to hospital and medical centers has become expensive and challenging due to travel restrictions and social distancing measures. Many Indigenous communities are also facing limited access to and shortages in personal protective equipment (PPE) and rapid-testing kits. Furthermore, there is still a great need for culturally safe contact tracing that will eliminate discrimination and enable effective tracing. BC's recovery must therefore:
 20. Facilitate information-sharing agreements, supported by and grounded in Section 7 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, to allow for the early reporting of suspected and confirmed cases to Indigenous governments;
 21. Implement and enforce screening methods to prevent non-residents from entering Indigenous territories and potentially spreading COVID-19;
 22. Develop and implement rapid-testing mechanisms to ensure Indigenous and remote communities are properly protected and prioritized; provide more PPE and rapid-testing kits to Indigenous communities across the province; ensure adequate and sustained funding is in place for culturally safe contact tracing;

⁵[https://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/COVID%20and%20human%20rights%20oversight%20public%20state
ment%20FINAL_0.pdf](https://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/COVID%20and%20human%20rights%20oversight%20public%20statement%20FINAL_0.pdf)

23. Allocate funding and resources towards establishing supports for those experiencing mental health crises and/or trauma that has been triggered by escalating incidences of racism, isolation, and prohibitive travel and social distancing measures throughout the pandemic. These measures may re-traumatize survivors of residential school system and those that have been subjected to colonial, discriminatory policies and measures in the past.
- Indigenous peoples face disproportionate rates of homelessness, which compounds growing challenges related to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing opioid overdose public health emergency. Since the onset of the pandemic, the [FNHA has reported](#) that there has been a 93% increase in overdose death amongst First Nations. These deaths are largely connected to social distancing measures aimed at slowing the transmission of COVID-19, making people less likely to access harm reductions services and to be in isolation when using drugs. In addition to dealing with the overdose crisis, many people have been forcefully displaced from their temporary housing in parks and have had little in the way of alternative housing supports and survival services. Many youth in care or who are experiencing homelessness have experienced services they rely upon forced to close, or they have lost their Ministry funded resource due to COVID-19 concerns. This has left them even more vulnerable and without the critical support they need.
24. BC's recovery plans need to allocate funding towards Indigenous peoples' healing and recovery from the drug overdose crisis, as it has been proven to be more lethal for First Nations than the pandemic. Not only will funding be needed to increase access to treatment and recovery services, as well as to support the creation of new treatment and recovery beds, but also to advance Indigenous healing and its inclusion within health care plans. Investing in the creation of recovery/healing homes and facilities that promote traditional healing and restorative justice will be instrumental in helping those suffering from addictions not only heal but foster and renew empowering connections to their cultural identities, communities, and lands. This must include a specific focus on the unique needs of Indigenous youth.
25. BC must take all steps necessary to allow people to shelter in designated park spaces as this can reduce the risks of illicit drug use through peer witnessing, harm reduction, community building, and the provision of privacy.
26. BC must convert temporary emergency housing into permanent housing for the after the pandemic; supporting the homeless urban Indigenous population should not end with COVID-19. BC must adopt an approach to house the most vulnerable rather than the most visible, reduce the potential harms associated with enforcement measures, and prioritize permanent housing for all.

27. BC must expand safe drug supply programs and harm-reduction initiatives in order to supply opioids and other drugs safely to the province's estimated 50,000 users.

Climate Change

- The Province's decision to keep the CleanBC climate plan at the heart of their efforts for economic recovery is a positive development, considering that BC and other Canadian jurisdictions have utilized the COVID-19 pandemic to relax environmental monitoring regulations and renew investment in emissions-intensive projects. COVID-19 enabled major energy infrastructure projects, including the Site C dam, Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and Coastal GasLink pipeline, to be categorized as "essential services." As a result, construction continues despite each project being developed without the minimum standard of Free, Prior and Informed Consent from affected Indigenous Nations. To support strong and effective climate change actions, the government must also invest in addressing the environmental and human rights concerns around these energy projects, including the establishment of "man camps" that endanger the safety and welfare of Indigenous women, and the need for strong Indigenous monitoring and oversight. Overall, BC's actions to mitigate provincial emissions and improve capacity for adaptation must be made in partnership with First Nations and be attentive to the energy and infrastructure needs of Indigenous communities.
28. BC must support First Nations in achieving energy security and establishing resilient energy infrastructure in Indigenous communities by expanding existing funding programs and improving community capacity to access and utilize provincial funding. Funding must also be made available to support Indigenous monitoring and oversight over energy infrastructure projects; this is imperative for transparency, reducing harm to the environment, and advancing Indigenous interests.
 29. BC should invest in advancing training and job development for Indigenous community members in the clean energy sector.
 30. BC must renew support for Independent Power Producers and encourage the development of energy projects that provide self-sufficient clean energy, job creation, and revenue for First Nations.
 31. BC's recovery plan should ensure sufficient resources are in place for Indigenous communities to identify and adapt to climate change impacts. Identify adaptation plans and projects by First Nations that are in development and provide sufficient capacity and funding to advance such projects toward completion.
 32. In partnership with Indigenous Nations and organizations, the public, and industry, BC must develop a plan to meet or exceed the remaining emissions reduction targets not currently set out in CleanBC. BC's ability to meet its climate goals must not be overly

reliant on international emissions trading, a market which is subject to negotiations at the COP26 UN climate conference in November 2021.

Specific Claims

- Indigenous Nations involved in specific claims processes are experiencing challenges related to COVID-19, including insufficient prioritization by Canada, variable and unpredictable delays (resulting in uncertainty across the claims community), technological challenges around remote conferencing, and access to necessary archival materials.
- Specific claims arise from Canada's failure to fulfill its legal obligations, historical treaty promises, and fiduciary duties to First Nations. As such the resolution of specific claims is non-discretionary. Article 27 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* underscore that the Crown has a duty to act fairly and honourably and with a full commitment to address historic land claims in a just and timely way.
- Resolution of claims is vital to the well-being of Indigenous Nations to help build the capacity and resilience to withstand crises like COVID-19. Delaying the resolution of these claims compounds the hardships that Indigenous Nations already experience as a result of their claims remaining unresolved and further rewards the Crown for unlawful behaviour.
- BC Indigenous Nations are disproportionately affected by unresolved claims; BC Nations' claims account for over half of all claims nation-wide due BC's unique reserve creation history and few historical treaties. One of the key challenges in advancing claims at this time involves accessibility to vital resources, databases, and files, which have been greatly restricted as a result of offices closing, self-isolation policies being enacted, and remote-access options being overloaded or not being in place for all staff.
- The halting of in-person record acquisition, as well as the halting of reprography request processing by institutions, means the limitation or halting of research that requires access to key files held by provincial and municipal record repositories, such as the British Columbia Archives, and this measure extending into the indefinite future.

29. BC must adequately resource and support provincial record repositories to ensure they are able to provide as soon as possible safe, on-site access to records, and allow necessary in-person appointments which enable access and still protect the health and safety of all archives staff and visitors so that vital claims research may proceed.

30. BC must ensure and support those Nations wanting technological support and/or infrastructure to deal with the demands of remote access may acquire it.

CONCLUSION:

Economic recovery for British Columbia rests in the hands of its people – in the hands of those given equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from an economy shaped by principles of collaboration,

reconciliation, and justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has erected new barriers to the fulfillment of Indigenous Titles and Rights while reinforcing longstanding ones. However challenging and trying it may be, the pandemic also brings with it the opportunity to re-build BC's policies and systems of governance in order to better support Indigenous communities and hold the government accountable to its commitment to meaningfully implement its *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Moving forward, BC must dismantle its racist structures and institutions, and invest in Indigenous and other racialized communities that possess an enormous wealth of expertise, talent, and innovative ideas for the future. BC's economic recovery strategies cannot continue to sacrifice the welfare, livelihoods, and rights of Indigenous peoples for the sake of quick capital gains and revenue. It must halt violations of Indigenous rights, including the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and it must sustain and uplift. The road to recovery must be built on transparency, consultation, coordination, and pathways to Indigenous self-determination.

FULL LIST OF UBCIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Consultation and Consent

1. At the forefront of BC's economic recovery should be sustained and comprehensive engagement, consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities, organizations, businesses, and leaders. Many First Nation members are employed within industries hit hard by the crisis, including the tourism and retail sectors, and need additional financial support. Indigenous peoples' input and insight are needed to identify priority investments, as well as the initiatives and actions needed to protect and support Indigenous economies and capacity-building.
2. BC's recovery plan needs to be premised on strong engagement with these Indigenous businesses, with specific strategies aimed at bolstering and incentivizing their operations and capital. Indigenous businesses need to be consulted and have the opportunity to contribute to the province's efforts to rectify the economic impacts COVID-19. Their feedback is also crucial in determining whether the emergency business supports introduced by the federal and provincial governments have been effective and successful.

Business and Economic Outlook

3. Identify and implement Indigenous-specific long-term economic recovery plans and objectives, including establishing an economic stimulus fund and obtaining federal and provincial funding and support for Indigenous businesses. As Indigenous businesses operate under different circumstances and conditions than other non-Indigenous companies (many are First Nation-owned, possess lower-collateral/higher-cost financing, and/or are seasonal enterprises), implementing Indigenous-specific supports is vital.

4. Engage with Indigenous businesses and service providers to determine their priorities; create a pathfinding support to navigate and complete applications for funding and programs, and to find resources and information on payment deferral options, business adaptation opportunities, cost-saving strategies, etc.

Quality of Life

5. BC's recovery plan should prioritize food security for Indigenous peoples and contain targeted funding for improving, increasing, and distributing food supplies. As there are no exact, accurate figures on First Nation expenditures related to food security since there is no requirement for financial reporting before year-end, the province should begin compiling and tracking data and feedback from First Nations as to better assess and respond to their food security needs. In addition, the access to and availability of essential items (diapers, toilet paper, medications, baby supplies, etc.) needs to be assessed and improved for First Nations.
6. Traditional food security must be a unique recovery priority, and economic recovery cannot become a justification for prioritizing sport fishing and recreational hunting at the expense of First Nations' ways of life. Through consultation and cooperation with First Nations, the sustainability of traditional food sources, depleted through climate crises and mismanagement, can become a pillar of recovery that will have lasting impact for communities. The government needs to invest in sustainable, culturally appropriate approaches to conservation and hunting that replaces the fragmented approaches to fishing and hunting rights currently employed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and provincial authorities that result in the contravention of Indigenous rights.
7. BC's recovery plan should aim to increase access to reliable and affordable internet service for Indigenous people working or studying from home and seeking to connect with community members and participate in cultural activities and events that have now moved online.
8. Establish more comprehensive, stable supports and streamlined processes for assisting First Nations' off-reserve membership who have had to rely on the provision of vouchers, gift cards and/or cash from their Nations for basic necessities, and have been forced to navigate the lengthy and unwieldy process of contacting their Nation for support only then to be redirected to the limited number of ISC funded off-reserve supports.
9. BC's recovery plan will need to allocate more funding to Friendship Centres and create more supports and services for off-reserve membership. All Indigenous peoples, regardless of whether they live on-reserve, should be given equal and sustained support, and BC will need to develop and implement a funding allocation formula that accurately reflects and upholds this principle.
10. BC's recovery plans will have to consider the costs related to renovations enabling social distancing and see the full implementation of its [Rural, Remote, First Nations and Indigenous COVID-19 Response Framework](#); as businesses and sectors re-open, their must be concrete

steps taken and formal measures established to consult with First Nations and protect isolated communities and their Elders (who are important, cherished knowledge keepers and language speakers) from non-residents potentially transmitting and spreading the disease in their territories.

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16. A comprehensive review of the child welfare impacts created by COVID-19 must be undertaken, with immediate investments made to ensure Indigenous families are supported to remain together or to be reunited.
17. Investments in access to justice, including mediations, to immediately rectify the backlog in family court child protection matters should be a priority area of focus.
18. Investments should be made in establishing independent human rights oversight committees with Indigenous representatives from both urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities. These committees should have mandates to strengthen human rights protection in COVID-19 response strategies, to track and respond to human rights violations associated with COVID-19 response measures, and to make regular recommendations to the government. Provincial and

federal funding and support must be readily available to kickstart anti-racist programs and initiatives, with particular attention being paid to the rise in anti-Indigenous racism and the critical need to address and halt it.

19. BC should fund and invest in having Indigenous knowledge-keepers and relevant human rights representatives take on official advisory roles to advance Indigenous rights and welfare to special committees, emergency task forces, crisis response working groups and other bodies established by Canada to coordinate its response to the pandemic.

Health Care

20. Facilitate information-sharing agreements, supported by and grounded in Section 7 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, to allow for the early reporting of suspected and confirmed cases to Indigenous governments.
21. Implement and enforce screening methods to prevent non-residents from entering Indigenous territories and potentially spreading COVID-19.
22. Develop and implement rapid-testing mechanisms to ensure Indigenous and remote communities are properly protected and prioritized; provide more PPE and rapid-testing kits to Indigenous communities across the province; ensure adequate and sustained funding is in place for culturally safe contact tracing.
23. Allocate funding and resources towards establishing supports for those experiencing mental health crises and/or trauma that has been triggered by escalating incidences of racism, isolation, and prohibitive travel and social distancing measures throughout the pandemic. These measures may re-traumatize survivors of residential school system and those that have been subjected to colonial, discriminatory policies and measures in the past.
24. BC's recovery plans need to allocate funding towards Indigenous peoples' healing and recovery from the drug overdose crisis. Not only will funding be needed to increase access to treatment and recovery services, as well as to support the creation of new treatment and recovery beds, but also to advance Indigenous healing and its inclusion within health care plans. Investing in the creation of recovery/healing homes and facilities that promote traditional healing and restorative justice will be instrumental in helping those suffering from addictions not only heal but foster and renew empowering connections to their cultural identities, communities, and lands.
25. BC must take all steps necessary to allow people to shelter in designated park spaces as this can reduce the risks of illicit drug use through peer witnessing, harm reduction, community building, and the provision of privacy.

26. BC must convert temporary emergency housing into permanent housing for the after the pandemic; supporting the homeless urban Indigenous population should not end with COVID-19. BC must adopt an approach to house the most vulnerable rather than the most visible, reduce the potential harms associated with enforcement measures, and prioritize permanent housing for all.
27. BC must expand safe drug supply programs and harm-reduction initiatives in order to supply opioids and other drugs safely to the province's estimated 50,000 users.

Climate Change

28. BC must support First Nations in achieving energy security and establishing resilient energy infrastructure in Indigenous communities by expanding existing funding programs and improving community capacity to access and utilize provincial funding. Funding must also be made available to support Indigenous monitoring and oversight over energy infrastructure projects; this is imperative for transparency, reducing harm to the environment and advancing Indigenous interests.
29. BC should invest in advancing training and job development for Indigenous community members in the clean energy sector.
30. BC must renew support for Independent Power Producers and encourage the development of energy projects that provide self-sufficient clean energy, job creation, and revenue for First Nations.
31. BC's recovery plan should ensure sufficient resources are in place for Indigenous communities to identify and adapt to climate change impacts. Identify adaptation plans and projects by First Nations that are in development and provide sufficient capacity and funding to advance such projects toward completion.
32. In partnership with Indigenous Nations and organizations, the public, and industry, BC must develop a plan to meet or exceed the remaining emissions reduction targets not currently set out in CleanBC. BC's ability to meet its climate goals must not be overly reliant on international emissions trading, a market which is subject to negotiations at the COP26 UN climate conference in November 2021.

Specific Claims

33. BC must adequately resource and support provincial record repositories to ensure they are able to provide as soon as possible safe, on-site access to records, and allow necessary in-person appointments which enable access and still protect the health and safety of all archives staff and visitors so that vital claims research may proceed.

34. BC must ensure and support those Nations wanting technological support and/or infrastructure to deal with the demands of remote access may acquire it.