

Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Leaders of the  
National Aboriginal Organizations

Backgrounder  
October 29, 2009

**MINISTERS AND NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LEADERS ACKNOWLEDGE  
IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION ON ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Pierre Corbeil, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Quebec:**

“The Government of Quebec is also committed to improving the well-being of Aboriginal people. This involves prioritizing education. Promoting academic success among Aboriginal people is key to helping communities ensure that their values and traditions are respected.”

**Hon. Darrell Dexter, Premier and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Nova Scotia:**

As Premier, I am committed to working with leaders both nationally and regionally to improve the quality of life for aboriginal people, said Premier Dexter. As a learning province, Nova Scotia will work to ensure young aboriginal people have the knowledge and skills to participate in the workforce. Together, we will address the barriers in our education system and the barriers to employment faced by Mi'kmaq youth.

**Hon. Rick Brewer, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, New Brunswick:**

“It is a pleasure for me to be part of this historic meeting where we as Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and the National Aboriginal Leaders are meeting to agree on a course for improving the quality of life of all aboriginal people in Canada. The Province of New Brunswick has set a goal to be “self sufficient” by the year 2026 and this includes all the First Nation communities and Aboriginal people in New Brunswick. Focusing on Education and lifelong learning, economic and economy development all grounded in a healthy and safe life style will be the keys pillars to making real changes to the lives and prosperity of all aboriginal people in New Brunswick and Canada. I am pleased to be part of this new direction.”

**National Inuit Leader Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami:**

"Improving the living conditions of Inuit, First Nations and Métis is paramount and urgent. This has been a good start. It is my fervent hope that this and subsequent meetings will lead to a well informed First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in 2010."

**National Chief Betty Ann Lavallée, CD, QJ(RTD), Congress of Aboriginal Peoples:**

“Only through Aboriginal peoples providing awareness and solutions that realize and promote the self-worth, merit, capacity and human dignity of all Aboriginal peoples regardless of where they live throughout their native homelands within Canada will real progress take place.”

**Hon. George Abbott, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, British Columbia:**

“The Province of British Columbia is committed to closing the socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal peoples and other British Columbians. Since 2005, our work partnering with First Nations, Métis leaders and with the federal government has resulted in real progress. I look forward to continuing that work within this new national approach to Aboriginal economic development and education.”

**Hon. Carolyn Bertram, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Prince Edward Island:**

"In Prince Edward Island, we are proud of our strong relationship with the Mi'kmaq and other Aboriginal peoples and look forward to engaging in the FPTA process. We believe that good relationships provide a solid foundation for addressing issues of common concern, and we look forward to working with our Aboriginal organizations and other orders of government to close the socio-economic gap facing the Aboriginal population and further Aboriginal educational opportunities."

**Hon. Bill Hutchinson, Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, Saskatchewan:**

"Provincial and federal governments must be consistent in how they focus their resources as we strive to meet our goals to eliminate the gaps in educational, employment and entrepreneurial outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. We believe that strengthening relationships is the way forward. In our province, Saskatchewan, understanding and partnerships with First Nations and Métis people are key to achieving our mutual goals."

**Clément Chartier, President, Métis National Council:**

"The future well-being and prosperity of Métis Nation citizens is greatly tied to creating lasting economic development opportunities in Métis communities. Cooperative efforts between Métis governments and the five western-most provinces, like this working group, will help foster that economic development, benefiting not only the Métis people, but all of Canada."

**Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President, Native Women's Association of Canada:**

“With more than 520 confirmed cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, the situation in Canada cries out for urgent action. This tragedy can no longer be ignored. We must immediately take action to address the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women. In order to be effective, any strategy created to improve the economic, educational, and life circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in Canada must begin by addressing the health and well-being of our communities. Ensuring the safety of our women and children is the first step to a brighter future. In fact, it is the first step if we, as Aboriginal peoples, are to have any kind of future at all. In our tradition, the women are the center of the family, and the community and therefore must be protected if we are to survive as a nation.”

**Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, Alberta:**

“I look forward to our continued discussions at the national level. They help create important links and provide insight and support for our ongoing collaboration with First Nation and Métis organizations in Alberta.”

**Hon. Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Newfoundland and Labrador**

“It gives me great pleasure to join my counterparts and Aboriginal leaders from across Canada as we come together to meet and explore tangible solutions that will improve the well-being of Aboriginal peoples throughout this country. It is important that we move forward with our dialogue among provinces, territories, the federal government and National Aboriginal Organizations to continue the process begun in Toronto as we develop national strategies to address the educational and economic development needs of Aboriginal peoples and communities. These national strategies will guide us as we address the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal peoples and communities in our jurisdictions.”

**Hon. Floyd Roland, Premier and Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Northwest Territories:**

“The Northwest Territories is tremendously enriched by the Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit peoples who make up a large part of the fabric of our territory. Their success is vital to the future of the Northwest Territories, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to build the partnerships that will allow us to advance opportunities and choices for all Canadian Aboriginal peoples.”

**Hon. Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Nunavut:**

“The signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was a significant step forward in improving the socio-economic state of Nunavut Inuit. However, the Agreement doesn’t change recent history and it doesn’t level the playing field overnight. We are ready to work with all Canadians to move forward on strategies and action plans to improve the lives of Aboriginal Canadians towards full participation in Canada.”

**Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo:**

“The Assembly of First Nations is pleased that this meeting has come about so quickly following our call for such a forum at the Council of the Federation meeting in August. The focus on Education and Economic Development is an important starting point for discussions that can lead to concrete results for First Nations women and youth, as well as those living on-reserve and in urban areas. Real progress requires real partnership to identify clear targets and firm reporting mechanisms. We want this work to culminate in a First Ministers Meeting in 2010 to bring the appropriate level of priority and investment to the issues affecting First Nations. We must not be intimidated by the tasks before us. Each day that we delay only sets us back further. Taking action now creates a better tomorrow for all Canadians. These challenges and opportunities belong to all of us, and we look forward to making real progress in partnership with the federal and provincial/territorial governments.”

**Hon. Eric Robinson, Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba:**

“Tackling the challenges facing Aboriginal people in education and economic development are critical for restoring health and well being to our communities.”

**Hon. Dennis Fentie, Premier, Yukon:**

“While our primary relationship is with Yukon First Nation governments, it is important that we meet and work with national Aboriginal leaders, Canada and other jurisdictions to ensure common issues are discussed and advanced at the national level. The Government of Yukon looks forward to the work this group will undertake to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal Canadians.”

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