



## Press Release

### **First Ministers Meeting: “Repeating the Mistakes of Coastal GasLink Pipeline”**

**March 3, (Ottawa, ON)** – On March 12-13, 2020 Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau will host a First Ministers meeting between federal and provincial governments in Ottawa. Discussions will include issues of economic development, environment, natural resource development and reconciliation.

On March 12<sup>th</sup> First Ministers will meet with National Indigenous Organizations (NIO) chosen by government to discuss issues affecting Indigenous people. These meetings will **exclude** those NIOs representing Métis, Status and non-Status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous people living off-reserve, and those representing Indigenous women, who have historically been invited to these discussions.

“It is shocking to see government learned nothing whatsoever from the conflicts over the Coastal Gas Link pipeline, and support across the country for the Wet’suwet’en people” said Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) National Chief Robert Bertrand. “That process was undermined when the wider Indigenous community was ignored. Government cannot pick and choose which Indigenous people they consult. The only legitimate process is one which involves all Indigenous people.”

CAP is the recognized NIO representing the interests of Métis, Status and non-Status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 80 per cent of Indigenous people live off-reserve.

The CAP-Daniels Supreme Court Decision affirmed that Métis and non-Status Indigenous people are “Indians” under Section 91(24) of the Constitution of Canada, and their interests are a matter of Federal responsibility. In 2018, CAP signed a Political Accord with the government of Canada acknowledging the federal responsibility to work collaboratively and include CAP and its affiliates in discussions affecting the rights, needs, and interests of CAP’s constituents.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, CAP community members from across Canada met in Ottawa for a conference to discuss the CAP-Daniels decision and policy issues impacting constituents. “Time and again this week, we heard our members express their ongoing frustration at government ignoring their interests. Having yet another example of exclusion is pushing their patience to the breaking point”, said CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand.

“We are demanding nothing more than what was promised by government” said CAP Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin. “Reconciliation will never happen when the majority of Indigenous people are shut out from national meetings, because of partisan politics from those who are given preferential treatment based on the ‘distinctions-based’ approach. They are making more illegitimate agreements that are setting up more conflict, lawsuits and costs down the line.”

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Under Canada's domestic obligations such as the duty to consult, and international obligations such as Canada's signature of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), government must engage in meaningful consultations with the representative organizations chosen by Indigenous people themselves on matters that affect their rights, needs, and interests.

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