



Strengthening the Relationship

Report on the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19th, 2004

Ottawa, Canada



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forewards

Prime Minister Paul Martin	i
The Honourable Denis Coderre	ii
The Honourable Andy Mitchell	iii

Introduction	4
---------------------	----------

Roundtable Discussion - *Renewing and Transforming the Relationship*

Introduction - Overview and Discussion Questions	6
Aboriginal Organizations	6
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples	7
First Nations	8
Inuit	10
Métis	11
Native Women’s Association of Canada	13

Roundtable Discussions - *Moving Forward on Policy Priorities*

Introduction - Overview and Discussion Questions	15
Achieving Results: Planning, Measuring and Reporting	15
Economic Development	16
Education	18
Health	19
Housing	20

Next Steps	23
-------------------	-----------



TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Annexes

A - Participant List	24
B - Prime Minister's Opening Speech	31
C - National Chief Phil Fontaine's Speech	38
D - President Jose Kusugak's Speech	42
E - Vice-President Audrey Poitras' Speech	46
F - The Honourable Andy Mitchell's Speech	49
G - The Honourable Denis Coderre's Speech	56
H - Parliamentary Secretary Andrew Telegdi's Speech	64
I - National Chief Dwight Dorey's Speech	66
J - President Kukdookaa Terry Brown's Speech	72
K - Closing Remarks by the Honourable Denis Coderre and the Honourable Andy Mitchell	75
L - Press Conference - Opening Remarks of the Prime Minister and National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations	78



Foreward by the Right Honourable Paul Martin

I would like to begin by thanking all of the Aboriginal leaders and government representatives for their participation in the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable held on Monday, April 19th, 2004 in Ottawa.

The goals of the Roundtable were to renew the relationship between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal leadership and to discuss meaningful ways of making tangible progress on improving the health and well being of Aboriginal peoples and communities. I believe that the day served as an important start on these matters and demonstrated our collective commitment to move forward in a new partnership that will bring about the necessary solutions to these issues.

It is my belief that the real success of this meeting should be attributed to the leadership of the participants that resulted in the Roundtable's positive outcomes. All participants agreed that the status quo was unacceptable and to make the necessary changes, it will take shared leadership, hard work and concrete action. In order to move forward, this Government, in partnership with Aboriginal peoples, is committed to advancing the four main outcomes of the Roundtable. The first outcome is the attached report, *Strengthening the Relationship* that provides a written record of "what was heard" at the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable.

In the coming months, the Government of Canada will be working with Aboriginal peoples, and with other levels of government, the private sector, policy experts and service providers to further the remaining three outcomes that were committed to. These include the development of an Aboriginal Report Card, sectoral follow-up sessions on quality of life issues discussed at the Roundtable and a policy meeting between Aboriginal leadership and members of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

I look forward to working with all partners on achieving tangible and measurable progress in our collective efforts to improve the lives of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada.



Foreward by the Honourable Denis Coderre

April 19th, I heard loud and clear that the Federal Government needs to take a more coherent approach to addressing Aboriginal issues. By holding this Roundtable and including all Aboriginal peoples, the Prime Minister has made it clear that for this government Aboriginal means First Nations whether they have status or not, Métis, and Inuit. I agree, we need to change the way we do business.

We can no longer deny the modern reality; Métis have Aboriginal rights, the majority of Aboriginal people live off reserve and in urban centers, and for far too long the Aboriginal population has been living well below the standard of the rest of the Canadian population. There is reason to be optimistic, however, because the large, young and rapidly growing Aboriginal population offers tremendous potential to make our country vibrant and prosperous.

In the past, the federal government has chosen to do things for Aboriginal people. This Government wants to modernize the approach and work with Aboriginal peoples. After all, you are the best to identify the issues and the solutions. We as a government have committed to taking action on our side. However, to do this successfully you need to find ways of working better together and develop a more coherent approach amongst yourselves.

Since the Roundtable, I have felt optimistic. The goal was to engage in a renewed dialogue between the Federal Government and the Aboriginal population. We must seize the momentum and bring in our provincial and territorial partners to make transformative change.



Foreward by the Honourable Andy Mitchell

The Sunday before the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, the Prime Minister of Canada made a strong and bold statement: "This will be an important summit. Quite simply, we need a new beginning. Let it be this Monday." And a new beginning it was!

As Co-Chair of the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable it is with great pride that I look back on April 19, 2004 where Prime Minister Paul Martin and more than 40 of my Cabinet, Parliamentary and Senate colleagues joined approximately 70 Aboriginal leaders from across Canada. It is also with personal commitment and hope that I look ahead as we continue to move together towards results, towards a strengthened relationship between Canada and Aboriginal peoples and most importantly towards concrete improvement in the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada.

To all of the delegates who attended the Roundtable, from Aboriginal organizations to Government of Canada officials, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the time, effort and the energy, that you have put into this dialogue. I think that we accomplished a significant amount on April 19, 2004, and I look forward to continuing to work with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners to create a new future together.



INTRODUCTION

For far too long, many Aboriginal peoples have been left out of the mainstream of Canada's prosperity. Recognizing that reality, the February 2004 *Speech from the Throne* (SFT) called for Aboriginal peoples to share in Canada's good fortune and participate fully in national life. The SFT also outlined the importance of a better start in life for Aboriginal children, education and skills development for Aboriginal individuals, and improved governance and economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities. The first ever *Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable* marked a significant step forward both in strengthening the relationship between the Government of Canada (GoC) and Aboriginal peoples,¹ and in providing an opportunity to foster new ideas to develop stronger, healthier and economically self-reliant Aboriginal peoples and communities.

The Roundtable was an unprecedented gathering of Ministers, parliamentarians and Aboriginal leaders. There was a wide spectrum of Aboriginal representation present at the Roundtable, including approximately 70 national Aboriginal leaders, experts and practitioners from 20 Aboriginal organizations. Federal representation included the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, members of the House of Commons Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, members of the Government Aboriginal Caucus, and other Cabinet Ministers with responsibility for Aboriginal issues. The Roundtable was co-chaired by the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and the Honourable Denis Coderre, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

The objective of the Roundtable was to engage in a renewed dialogue that would contribute to transformative change and improve the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada. The Roundtable demonstrated the Government of Canada's and the Prime Minister's personal commitment to a more coherent and inclusive approach to Aboriginal issues. It was also an opportunity to reaffirm that progress on Aboriginal issues requires, as a first step, a new era of partnership and cooperation between a number of entities, including the Government of Canada, Aboriginal peoples, provincial and territorial governments, the private sector and key stakeholders, to make real and sustainable progress.

The expected outcome of this Roundtable was to set a new direction and find innovative ways to strengthening relationships in order to build a strong and sustainable partnership with Aboriginal peoples. Discussions at the Roundtable included morning

¹ The term Aboriginal refers to First Nations (including on-reserve and off-reserve), Métis, Inuit and non-status Indians.



sessions on *Renewing and Transforming the Relationship* and afternoon sessions on *Moving Forward on Policy Priorities*, which entailed discussions centred on achieving results, economic development, education, health and housing. This report will provide highlights from both series of sessions, include all speeches presented at the Roundtable as well as the opening comments by the Prime Minister and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations at the Roundtable's concluding press conference and outline next steps following the Roundtable.



RENEWING AND TRANSFORMING THE RELATIONSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The morning sessions of the Roundtable focussed on renewing and transforming the relationship between the GoC and the various national Aboriginal organizations. The objectives of this session were to provide organizational delegates and Government of Canada representatives an opportunity to identify issues, actions and commitments for renewing and transforming current relationships.

There was a total of six breakout groups: First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Native Women's Association of Canada and sector-specific Aboriginal organizations. In terms of discussion content, the groups followed the following question format quite closely:

1. What ideas do you have to renew and transform our relationship so we can improve the outcomes for Aboriginal peoples? (i.e., ways of working better together)
2. What are the concrete steps and/or commitments we can make to move forward together with other partners?

ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS

This group was slightly different from the other morning breakout sessions in that the group's composition was made up of representatives from over twenty national Aboriginal organizations. The majority of these organizations were referred to as sector-specific (e.g., expertise in health, education and other areas), in that their area of focus was related to one of the five sector policy priority areas (i.e., achieving results, economic development, education, health and housing) being discussed in the afternoon sessions of the Roundtable.

In regards to ideas for renewing and transforming their relationship with the Government of Canada, suggestions included recognizing the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and that different needs require different solutions, ensuring equitable treatment of all Aboriginal groups, the need for a commitment to follow through with a concrete plan and that a government-to-government relationship requires better government capacity to exercise jurisdiction. In regards to the plan, it was further recommended that a plan be developed with milestones to measure progress.



The group had some specific suggestions to improve GoC policy/programming, which include:

- increase integration and streamlining;
- view consultation with Aboriginal groups as a key element;
- engage the private sector/corporate Canada;
- ensure cultural relevancy;
- address community needs; and,
- strengthen reporting and data collection.

In order to achieve the above, it was proposed that the GoC ensure commitments for long-term and adequate funding and that Aboriginal groups identify other sources of revenue outside the GoC to fund their work. Other suggestions included dismantling Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, increasing the role of Aboriginal institutions in administering programs/services and increasing Aboriginal representation in Canadian institutions.

The group then provided some concrete steps to move forward such as building on best practices (i.e., Voisey's Bay) and involve experts in decision making. The delegates also had some suggestions for making progress in the sector priority areas. In order to increase Aboriginal participation in the economy, identify opportunities for partnering with corporate Canada, develop strategies for hiring Aboriginal peoples, and create a single agency for business development. In efforts to improve data for more informed decision making, the group recommended better reporting mechanisms, International Organization for Standardization-like criteria, better health and social determinants and conducting an environmental scan of Aboriginal organizations.

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

National Chief Dwight Dorey gave opening comments in the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) session on renewing and transforming the relationship. One of the first items of discussion was the status of CAP's relationship with the Government of Canada. CAP members were very concerned by the inequitable treatment they felt they had been receiving. They stated that they are a national political organization that has been in existence since 1971 and had been on an equal footing with other national Aboriginal organizations at the 1982 Constitutional talks. In response, the GoC affirmed that CAP was an important organization and reconfirmed its intentions to continue working with CAP in efforts to move quickly on real issues.



The group then explored various reasons as to why CAP viewed its current situation as strained. One area for explanation was the need to ascertain CAP's membership. CAP noted that the definition of Aboriginal peoples in the *Constitution* does not limit representation. Many agreed that there are different perspectives among the organizations on representation and that this only complicates various relationships.

The issue of CAP's relationship with other Aboriginal organizations was also seen as a contributing factor to CAP's current unsatisfactory relationship with the GoC. It was noted that CAP's membership was similar to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) in that both organizations had membership which overlapped with other national Aboriginal organization memberships. CAP acknowledged that there were differing opinions regarding its membership among national Aboriginal organizations. However, CAP reiterated that because another organization states it represents a group of peoples does not preclude CAP from stating that it also represents some of those members. Canada's political system was then cited as another example of overlap in that there are many levels of government that speak for Canadians in one way or another.

In terms of next steps, CAP requested that it be involved at the beginning of GoC policy development activities. It also noted that a key concrete measure to renew its relationship with the GoC would be to treat CAP and its members on an equal footing with the other three national Aboriginal organizations (i.e., Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Métis National Council). All participants generally agreed that "silos" both among Aboriginal organizations and within the GoC need to be addressed, that federal-provincial wrangling was part of the problem and that current programs and services be looked at to tackle these challenges. Other items discussed included the need to stay focussed on concrete issues, that the broader policy agenda be results-based and that the goal in relation to programming be to close the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

FIRST NATIONS

The session began with general agreement to work together in a collaborative fashion in order to achieve results and appreciation for the opportunity of the current forum as a first step in this process. National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) noted that the success of the renewed relationship will be dependent on a Nation to Nation - Government to Government approach, recognizing the Government of Canada's fiduciary relationship with First Nations.



The group began outlining elements of an action plan to renew the relationship. It was agreed that elements of a plan could be developed in a short time period, however, all work would have to be done in collaboration with mutually agreed upon time lines. Time lines would include a short and medium term agenda that is realistic about what can be achieved. In regards to measuring achievements, it was recommended that the measurements of success must be established in partnership between First Nations and the Government of Canada in order to be meaningful and accurate. In terms of principles, commitment and good faith reinforced by follow-through were seen as key as was a jointly agreed upon policy decision-making process.

When discussing the transformation of the relationship, there were a number of issues for consideration. The first was in relation to identity and jurisdiction, in that identity has no geographical boundaries. It was noted that some people are creative in how they work within the system and that working within the various jurisdictions is not always about more money. It can be about improving existing processes. The second item was the abolishment of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). It was suggested that everyone talks about abolishing INAC but no one ever discusses what that would mean or entail. Given the underlying assumptions of the *Indian Act* and the bureaucracy established to administer INAC, First Nations delegates confirmed that both the *Act* and the Department must be eliminated. The pace by which this is achieved, however, must be supported by First Nations and accomplished through re-organizing the Government of Canada's machinery and the recognition and implementation of First Nations governing institutions. In response, the group discussed power sharing and taking risk in order to make bold and innovative changes in these areas.

The last two items of discussion were jurisdictional issues and working within an outdated system. First Nations delegates asserted the clear need for a stronger role in certain areas as outstanding jurisdictional issues have resulted in policies which are often prejudicial and prevent progress. Pan-Aboriginal programming was cited as an example of the GoC's response to jurisdictional issues that fails to meet the specific needs of First Nations and consequently also fails to create transformative change. It was then suggested that the GoC update its processes to reflect the new Nation to Nation governance model. The status quo is not acceptable, in that the current attitude and systems prevent partners from being innovative. There must be better linkages between political decisions and their implementation by government officials. It was reiterated that the need for taking risks and being bold about implementing change has to occur. National Chief Phil Fontaine closed by saying that the GoC needs a new mandate to deal with First Nations peoples and this must include an intergovernmental process.



INUIT

The Inuit session began with Jose Kusugak, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kantami (ITK), thanking the Prime Minister for his kind words at the opening and for his announcement of the Inuit Secretariat. The Prime Minister raised the issues of the environment and Arctic sovereignty. Traditionally, the Inuit have occupied and travelled over the sea ice in the Arctic region and explained that their land occupancy has been an essential element to demonstrate ownership over the Arctic. More recently, the Inuit have been very involved nationally and internationally on the impacts of climate change on the environment and have been working with Environment Canada but recognize the need to work with other departments. The ITK explained that there is substantial research on climate change as particular attention was paid to the effects on sea ice during land claims processes. This issue is further complicated by the international context as the depletion of sea ice is directly related to shipping routes.

The session centred on three areas: current situation, suggestions to strengthen the Inuit peoples relationship with the GoC and concrete steps or commitments to move forward together. In regards to the current environment, it was stated that the Inuit have always been committed to working collaboratively to improve the lives of all Aboriginal peoples. However, the Government of Canada and its departments must recognize the complex environment and geography of the North, especially transportation costs that result in operating costs including service delivery that can be twice as much as in southern Canada.

Several delegates noted that a current challenge is that a lot of key areas lack policy. For example, there are opportunities for commercial fishing and mining but no policy exists to guide activities. Others noted that where policy exists, objectives may be similar to other Aboriginal policies but northern realities require different, Inuit-specific approaches. Inuit representatives made the point that the socio-economic challenges facing their regions are interconnected and interrelated policy approaches must be considered. For example, a new housing strategy would also be an economic development initiative, that would lead to new educational and training opportunities. Historically, the economic benefits including job creation from northern housing programs remained with southern based contractors, rather than Inuit in Arctic regions.

In order to address some of these challenges, some specific suggestions were made such as increasing training opportunities to improve access to employment, making improvements to the current Ranger situation and addressing the lack of infrastructure that exists in the North. The group also generated some suggestions to renew and strengthen the relationship such as increasing transparency, community ownership and



control, viewing partnership as key to making change happen, tailoring initiatives to the unique needs of the community and working more closely with a variety of GoC departments.

In regards to concrete steps or commitments, most people in the room saw the Inuit Secretariat as an excellent first step to secure the place of Inuit people in Canada. The Secretariat would support an Inuit-specific agenda and should be provided with the responsibility to deliver on Inuit priorities as identified by Jose Kusugak in his opening remarks, which include:

1. a partnership agreement between the Government of Canada and Inuit;
2. an integrated Inuit-specific socio-economic development policy approach; and,
3. adoption of a Land Claims Implementation Policy.

Other suggestions included having Arctic tours for senior GoC officials and more Inuit people travelling south to educate others about the Arctic. By educating, listening and understanding one another, delegates believed that they could move forward together and with other partners.

MÉTIS

Audrey Poitras, Vice-President of the Métis National Council (MNC) opened the session and stressed the need to formalize the commitment of the GoC to begin to work with the Métis Nation to address long outstanding Métis issues. A package was handed to delegates that contained a draft Framework Agreement that the MNC proposed could serve as an enabling document for this new relationship as the GoC currently lacks a mandate to negotiate with the Métis people. Other key issues the MNC raised included resolution of outstanding rights issues in relation to Powley and other Métis legal issues (i.e., scrip, jurisdiction), options for a registration of Métis from Ontario westward, the creation of a department of Aboriginal Affairs, and securing capacity for the Métis to work in partnership with the GoC based on a nation to nation approach in urban areas and other sectors.

The GoC responded that it is important to get all the key stakeholders (including provinces and territories) around the table to fully understand the implications of Powley (i.e., who are the Métis, what is meant by a nation to nation approach, etc.). In this regard, the GoC was also supportive of facilitating a registry. The discussion then turned to Louis Riel. Many Métis delegates reaffirmed the MNC's position that a "quick



fix or exoneration” would not be acceptable as it would take away from what he had done and would only hide the truth of what really happened. There was overall agreement that Louis Riel was an important figure, not just for the Métis people but for all Canadians, and that this was an important initiative to collaboratively pursue.

The group then discussed challenges with GoC programming. Métis representatives described how there has been no federal uptake to date on establishing Métis specific services/programming, how most services accessed by Métis are pan-Aboriginal, and their concerns with service delivery providers who do not work with the MNC. The GoC reaffirmed its intention to work with the MNC and noted, however, that the GoC cannot get involved in many of these issues since they are best addressed by Aboriginal organizations themselves.

Another area of discussion was the historic nature of the Powley case, and the transformative impact it has had on a number of areas. It was suggested that this decision provided a framework for the Métis people’s relationship with the GoC, however, basic principles of the relationship needed to be developed. One delegate recommended a pro-active, results-oriented negotiation approach rather than current efforts, which include protracted litigation that sustains an adversarial relationship. Further, during his time in the session, the Prime Minister committed to pursuing discussions with the MNC on its draft Framework Agreement and referred the document to the Federal Interlocutor for follow-up.

Other issues raised were the contrast between reserves and Métis communities, the lack of economic opportunities for Métis peoples and the need to recognize Métis veterans. The GoC reiterated its plan to examine the Métis veterans issue and its intention to make restitution as determined by the investigation.

In terms of next steps, it was suggested that certain issues needed to be explored such as the implications of the Framework Agreement, the definition of a nation to nation approach, how a distinctive Métis policy would fit into broader GoC policy, means to address capacity concerns, and how to meet the unique needs of Métis living in northern areas. Some suggestions to support the work ahead included pursuing negotiations on the Framework Agreement, establishing realistic time frames, using a collaborative approach for negotiations, developing a GoC inventory of success stories, which the GoC and the Métis people can build upon.



NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Kukdookaa Terri Brown from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) opened by stating how pleased she was with the GoC efforts at renewing relationships and NWAC's inclusion in the Roundtable. The group then discussed NWAC's participation in various GoC initiatives. NWAC noted that Aboriginal women must have greater opportunities to consistently participate in processes. In order to do so, NWAC needs more capacity to address the issues affecting Aboriginal women and to deal with their chronic lack of resources. In addition, NWAC requires more resources to improve their regional representation in order to make the organization more effective. The GoC stated it was committed to working with Aboriginal women and agreed that building capacity and inclusiveness were important.

NWAC then addressed their Sisters in Spirit Campaign and the resources to develop a strategic plan for it. There is an estimate of over 500 missing and/or murdered Aboriginal women in this country. This campaign would document the circumstances around their disappearances and murders and create a national registry, a toll-free hot line and educational materials in order to raise public awareness regarding the underlying causes of violence against Aboriginal women.

The group then discussed priority areas for Aboriginal women such as poverty and its link to capacity building, language and culture, training and family violence. The group discussed how women often feel marginalised from cross-cutting issues that have important implications for women. For instance, in the case of housing, women are the heads of households in a large number of families, in education, opportunities for women are fewer than men and in health, women have unique challenges accessing services particularly in remote areas. Yet, despite their direct effect, Aboriginal women are often left out of the decision-making processes in these policy areas.

In terms of suggestions to renew and transform the relationship between the GoC and Aboriginal women, it was suggested that there was a need to:

- address capacity resources for NWAC and their regional representatives;
- meet and discuss issues before jointly drafting policy;
- increase participation of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal youth;
- improve communication in order to increase representation;
- ensure involvement is consistent and maintained;
- develop gender specific results and reporting; and,
- secure mechanisms for leadership development for Aboriginal women.



The group also had some broader suggestions to improve Aboriginal policy/program development. For instance, GoC initiatives should be reviewed and where results are not being achieved, changes should be made immediately. Another suggestion was that the tripartite committee model be considered as a means to move forward on priority areas. The model involves three levels of governments, includes representatives from youth and women's groups, makes decisions by consensus and promotes equal recognition of all parties.

Before concluding, the group considered immediate areas for investment. Besides the suggestions identified above, others included doing more to address violence against Aboriginal women, exploring opportunities with broadband, examining matrimonial property rights, acknowledging that women, youth and elders have a fundamental role to play in language and culture and building awareness of Aboriginal women's issues. In addition, NWAC acknowledged the importance of developing a relationship with other national Aboriginal organizations.



MOVING FORWARD ON POLICY PRIORITIES

INTRODUCTION

The afternoon sessions of the Roundtable focussed on starting an on-going dialogue on five policy areas that were mutually selected as important by Aboriginal organizations and the Government of Canada. These included achieving results, economic development, education, health and housing.

The objectives of these sessions were to discuss changes that are needed in these areas to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada and identify how to move forward collaboratively in each of these areas. Ultimately, these sessions were intended as a first step to further roundtables on these and other key policy areas.

Questions that were presented to the participants for discussion included:

1. What are some of the key activities in this sector that can have the greatest impact on improving the lives of Aboriginal peoples?
2. How can we work better together to improve outcomes in these priority areas?
3. What are the concrete steps and/or commitments we can make to move forward together and with other partners in this sector?

ACHIEVING RESULTS

Participants acknowledged that transparency and accountability are critical to achieving success on any of the key policy priority areas discussed at this Roundtable. Present federal efforts require a greater degree of transparency and equal attention on not only what is spent, but also on the outcomes of that spending. Comments included that a results based approach translates into taking responsibility, although this will require resources to plan, measure and evaluate. Currently, the Government of Canada is completing an inventory of all of its programming and spending related to Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal leaders strongly emphasized that the GoC needs to understand and take into account that there are distinct differences among Aboriginal peoples. The need for meaningful involvement and specific focus on First Nations (on/off reserve), Inuit, Métis,



and Aboriginal women, as distinct groups with unique situations was highlighted. A pan-Aboriginal approach that attempts to “aboriginalize” or blur these distinctions was strongly discouraged by the Aboriginal leaders and will be resisted. For example, an off reserve Aboriginal policy approach may not capture the uniqueness of Métis peoples. Diversity will need to be built into any approach to acknowledge the different frameworks and realities, including geography, language and culture. Participants cautioned that an “Aboriginal Affairs” approach does not honour this diversity and continues the “Indian Affairs” approach. Therefore, achieving and measuring results should begin with clarifying relationships between Aboriginal organizations and the Government of Canada.

Participants also called for the participation of Aboriginal people that are involved in the delivery of policies and programs, in the design of targets, measurements and standards setting. For example, Aboriginal organizations that act as delivery agents voiced the need for their involvement in determining results frameworks for more effective programs and policies that affect their clients. Programmes and structures need to be designed with Aboriginal peoples, not for Aboriginal peoples. Ultimately, results based accountability needs to have built in flexibility, be relevant to the people it serves, and be based on clear targets and time frames.

The session also articulated the need to take a strategic approach and express results so that they make sense to all Canadians. Participants highlighted that developing a mission statement together means determining together how to reach it and taking responsibility together for the results. Evaluation and measurement frameworks are the basis of tracking the progress of policies and programs and can also be the foundation of tracking relationships.

Many issues will require focussed attention over the longer term if lasting and meaningful improvements are going to be made that will improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples, such as the development of a professional public service and the effective collaboration and networking of Aboriginal institutions and organizations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Although recent successes for Aboriginal businesses and human resource strategies were highlighted in the session, the need to be more collaborative, strategic and successful in removing barriers to economic growth was also acknowledged.



A number of areas for potential economic development were identified, including oil/gas, tourism, ecotourism and traditional economies such as fisheries and forestry. Additionally, broadband was cited as a key for the development of northern and remote communities, as it allows for opportunities such as distance learning and e-business.

Despite the promise of these areas, current federal approaches minimize the potential for sustainable growth. Bureaucratic processes are often too slow, resulting in many lost investment opportunities. For example, the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline offers significant return on investment, but the government needs to get its act together quickly (e.g., approvals).

A number of elements were identified in the session to improve economic development. These included facilitating and fostering participation in resource development through research on best practices for resource management activities that are respectful of rights and land claims agreements; participation in regional partnerships; access to venture capital; First Nations/Inuit/Métis specific programs; improved infrastructure in Aboriginal communities; continuing employment strategies; building connections with potential investors so that communities can attract and expand businesses; creating and sharing knowledge and models of success through community-based communication vehicles; and further dialogue between government Ministers and Aboriginal organizations. Despite the opportunities that do exist, Aboriginal people often lack the necessary skills and capacity to participate. In addition, economic development and infrastructure activities need to be better coordinated while there should be greater awareness of programs that can be accessed to foster economic development. In addition, economic development and infrastructure activities need to be better coordinated while there should be greater awareness of programs that can be accessed to foster economic development.

Participants stated that policies need to be implemented consistently, as well as holistically in related policy approaches. For example, this may include the integration of social/economic areas, and inter-relationships between housing, education, economic development and other areas. Some participants suggested a single national agency for economic development, while one participant cautioned that this approach may have difficulty in understanding regional needs.

Policy must also be integrated yet specific to account for the different needs and approaches of First Nations (on/off reserve), Inuit and Métis. Aboriginal organizations have a key role to play and should be involved in developing policies and deciding funding allocations. Although there has been some success in Aboriginal/federal government partnerships, more work is needed.



Finally, the group discussed moving to transfer type funding arrangements rather than individual funding agreements, developing a long term strategy collaboratively and partnering with the private sector. Participants recognized that the issue is too complex for a short discussion and acknowledged the importance of future opportunities to continue the discussion in appropriate post-roundtable follow-up sessions with representative Aboriginal organizations.

EDUCATION

The session positioned education as a key investment necessary to achieve a better quality of life for Aboriginal peoples. Life long learning is a cornerstone for the federal government, from early child support through education, adult literacy and skills development. It was pointed out that this was consistent with the traditional concept of life long learning held by many Aboriginal peoples.

Participants voiced the need to establish a process that incorporates Aboriginal peoples in the development of policies for education from early childhood development to apprenticeship. The need for a full review of Aboriginal education was also identified, with the necessary political and bureaucratic will invested in the process. The process of this review should include meaningful inclusion from First Nations (on/off reserve), Inuit, Métis and Aboriginal women, as well as provinces and territories. Representatives stressed the need to address specific cultural and linguistic educational programming that reflects the geographic and historic differences between First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities.

Access to education was cited as a large problem. Métis participants discussed the difficulty of accessing child care development funding and overall the session identified gaps in the 6-12 age range. Other issues involved the remoteness of many First Nations schools, which can be small and often lack capacity and tools to manage.

Participants were favourable to the creation of First Nations school boards and emphasized the need for jurisdiction with the caveat that control of curriculum and the inclusion of traditional lifestyles and ceremonies be part of the package. Aboriginal curriculum should be available for all Canadian students, with a more recent history of Aboriginal peoples, including treaties, history, culture and the impact of Indian residential schools. Some participants suggested that education must be broadened into a holistic focus that includes key areas such as self-esteem, image, money management so that Aboriginal youth can achieve success in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.



The need for stay in school initiatives was also highlighted, including targeted programs to assist in decreasing the high school drop out rate, reintegration programs for those who have dropped out and post secondary supports for Aboriginal students. The ability for all Aboriginal students to attend post-secondary education (PSE) was strongly voiced, including the need for scholarships or endowment funds for Aboriginal groups currently not receiving PSE funding and the removal of funding caps for PSE to clear the backlog of waiting lists so more off reserve members can access funding.

Participants reinforced that sound and formal education is key for participation in the work force and that Aboriginal peoples need skills to fully participate in the economy. For example, there are mega projects in development (e.g., pipeline, fibre optic cable, etc.) that could become lost opportunities if Aboriginal peoples suffer from a lack of education or skills development. Comments included the need to raise standards in schools, as well as establish apprenticeship programs to connect Aboriginal students with the private sector. A call for a continued dialogue on education was voiced, including re-tooling federal policies on First Nations schooling, improving PSE management and delivery and working with Aboriginal leaders, provinces and universities.

HEALTH

The session opened with an acknowledgement that although progress has been made in closing the gap, there is much yet to do before Aboriginal peoples can enjoy health status at the same level as other Canadians.

Mental health was identified as a key issue and participants called for a national program for mental health. In many First Nation/Inuit communities there is a shortage/absence of mental health workers, while at the same time the number of nurses are projected to reach critical shortages in these communities. Participants described issues unique to different groups. For some, it was the need for healing from residential schools. For others, the issue was not so much on progress in health but rather on the ability to thrive. The Inuit, in particular, identified the epidemic of suicides in their communities and the harmful impacts of global warming and environmental issues.

Access was another key issue that was raised. Some participants called for a cross-jurisdictional approach that reflects the mobility of Aboriginal people and overcomes on/off or status/non-status issues. Métis participants cited the lack of Métis specific health programs. Others insisted the quality of the health care system must also be



judged on the equality of service between southern urban areas and remote and northern communities.

The need for a holistic approach to health and wellness was also highlighted in the session. Participants wanted a balance between leading edge western medicine and their cultural values and traditional knowledge of medicine and healing. The interconnection between health, housing, education and other determinants was also stressed. Participants called for meaningful inclusion and control in the development and delivery of health policy and programs, criticizing pan-Aboriginal approaches which fail to account for the unique conditions, culture and reality of First Nations (on/off reserve and status/non-status), Inuit, and Métis, including the perspectives of Aboriginal women.

First Nations participants stated that achieving change requires their meaningful participation in establishing directions for First Nations health. In addition, other First Nations objectives include improving First Nations' health status to an optimum level, increased access to quality health services and First Nations' responsibility for health programs and services. The Inuit presented the need for Inuit-specific policies and programs which recognize the roles of the land claim organizations. The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy was cited as an excellent model that has allowed the Métis to demonstrate their potential in the area of health. Aboriginal Head Start on and off reserve was also cited as a best practice, as older children who have participated in this program have continued to excel in school.

The importance of ensuring that Aboriginal children have a good start in life was emphasized, as well as the necessity of focussing on healthy children's development. Participants also noted that self-esteem for children is critical and the positive spinoffs from activities such as sports should not be overlooked. Other ideas involved exploring possible private sector partnerships, research, developing good science and coordinating the dissemination of new health information to those who could use it the most.

HOUSING

The housing session generated a discussion on current issues, needs and suggestions for turning the corner on housing. Deplorable housing shortages, overcrowding and outstanding need for repairs to the existing stock were acknowledged by all Aboriginal participants as critical issues that need to be addressed. First Nations and Inuit participants in particular stressed the extreme housing shortages in their communities. It



was suggested that addressing housing on an urgent basis does not preclude the development of a longer term plan.

A number of key issues and challenges were discussed, including the strong relationship between social issues and housing. Inuit and Métis participants related that it was not uncommon to have three generations living in one room. The resulting impact on stress levels can often result in family violence or suicide. Federal participants identified provinces as necessary partners in tackling housing as well as related social issues, such as homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse.

Aboriginal participants criticized the devolution of social housing programs and funding to provinces, citing the need for greater accountability and spending according to needs. The discussion called for an approach that recognizes greater control by First Nations (on/off reserve), Inuit and Métis people. The views of Aboriginal women need to be heard so that houses can become homes.

Many Aboriginal people have housing experience but are often overlooked in building projects. Participants highlighted the need to consult and acknowledge local voices and needs and cultural differences that may affect how people view housing and determine the type of housing they want. Inuit participants indicated that a lot of time is wasted as the building season is short for many of their communities and many Inuit rely on public housing as there is no housing market in many areas. Inuit representatives stressed the need for effective housing programs that will also address many of the health, education and unemployment issues in their communities.

First Nations representatives indicated that a sustainable housing system and housing authority is an essential element to moving forward in tackling the deplorable condition and critical shortage of housing. The current approach has failed, and there is a need to move away from dependency to home ownership, employment and economic development opportunities. Greater coordination among federal departments was also identified, as well as stronger linkages between housing, training and economic development.

Other issues include the need for a comprehensive plan for Aboriginal homelessness, a long term plan for social housing and supportive housing for those with special needs. Métis participants relayed that current homelessness programming does not work well for Métis organizations. However, they did indicate that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has established a good relationship and helped build Métis capacity. Participants suggested that best practices be highlighted and built upon. Additionally, efficiencies should be rewarded and not used as a pretext for reducing funds, while



policies and programs should be more flexible to allow for creative solutions. Ultimately, the federal government must be prepared to take risks if it wants innovative solutions.



NEXT STEPS

The outcomes of the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable confirmed the collective commitment of Aboriginal leaders and the Government of Canada to work collaboratively in making measurable progress on improving the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples. Discussions during the day focussed on making transformative changes that would produce tangible results in education and employment, health care, housing, economic development, the special circumstances of urban Aboriginal peoples and the unique needs of Aboriginal women and youth.

In efforts to move forward, the GoC committed to four important steps to sustain momentum from the Roundtable and achieve results. The first was to prepare this report, entitled *Strengthening the Relationship*. It is hoped that this report will serve as an early blueprint for the development of a collective action plan. The overarching goal is to ensure that the innovative ideas and advances made at the April 19th, 2004 Roundtable get carried forward in efforts to make measurable progress.

Measuring progress requires appropriate tools, which is why the second commitment was the announcement of an Aboriginal Report Card that will initially be included as a chapter in *Canada's Performance: Annual Report to Parliament*. The Report Card is an important initiative that will allow governments, Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians to see and understand the progress being made in addressing key socio-economic priority areas and transforming Canada's relationship with Aboriginal peoples. It will include jointly developed key indicators and identify areas where more work is needed to deliver on closing the gap in the living conditions of Aboriginal people.

In addition to establishing a roadmap for action and ensuring mechanisms in place to measure progress, the Government of Canada wanted to continue the effort from the afternoon policy sessions on moving forward on establishing key priorities. In response, the Prime Minister made a commitment to conduct a series of sector-specific policy roundtables in partnership with Aboriginal peoples. These meetings would include Aboriginal experts and organizations, provincial and territorial governments and private sector representatives.

Last, in order to provide a forum to review progress on all the items above and other initiatives, the Government of Canada agreed to convene a meeting between members of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal leaders and possibly other partners. This meeting has been scheduled for mid to late Fall 2004 to measure progress since the Roundtable and determine policy priorities with an action plan for further work.



**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ATTENDED THE APRIL 19TH, 2004
CANADA-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE**

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPANTS

Assembly of First Nations

Executive Committee

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Phil Fontaine | National Chief |
| Rick Simon | Regional Chief (Nova Scotia and Newfoundland) |
| Jeff Tomah | For the Regional Chief (New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) |
| Lance Haymond | For Regional Chief (Quebec and Labrador) |
| Charles Fox | Regional Chief (Ontario) |
| Francis Flett | Regional Chief (Manitoba) |
| Alphonse Bird | Regional Chief (Saskatchewan) and President (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) |
| Jason Goodstriker | Regional Chief (Alberta) |
| Shawn Atleo | Regional Chief (British Columbia) |
| Rick O'Brien | Regional Chief (Yukon) |
| Bill Erasmus | Regional Chief (Northwest Territories) |
| Terry Young | Co-Chair (Youth Council) |

Additional Representatives

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Wendy Grant-John | Commissioner, AFN Renewal Commission |
| Wallace Fox | Chief, Onion Lake First Nation |
| Robert Watts (AFN) | |
| Roger Jones (AFN) | |
| Don Kelly (AFN) | |
| Dean Janvier (AFN) | |



Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Board of Directors	
Jose Kusugak	President
Duane Smith	Vice President and President (Inuit Circumpolar Conference - Canada)
Kaludjak, Paul	Director and President (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated)
Nellie Cournoyea	Director and President (Inuvialuit Regional Council)
William Anderson III	Director and President (Labrador Inuit Association)
Pita Aatami	Director and President (Makivik Corporation)
Veronica Dewar	<i>Ex Officio</i> Director and President (Pauktuutit)
Adamie Padlayat	<i>Ex Officio</i> Director and President (National Inuit Youth Council)
Sheila Watt-Cloutier	President (Inuit Circumpolar Conference - International)
Adamie Alaku	Makivik Corporation
James Eetoolook	First Vice President, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
Don Dicker, Sr.	Labrador Inuit Association

Additional Representatives

Whit Fraser	ITK
Stephen Hendrie	ITK
Michael McGoldrick	ITK
John Merritt	ITK
Tooneejoulee Kootoo	ITK
Onalee Randell	ITK

Métis National Council

Métis National Cabinet

Audrey Poitras	Vice President, Minister of Finance, Minister of Economic Development and President (Métis Nation of Alberta)
Tony Belcourt	Minister Responsible for International Issues and President (Métis Nation of Ontario)
Lorna Docken	Minister without Portfolio (Métis National Council) and Acting President (Métis Nation - Saskatchewan)



David Chartrand	Minister of Social Development and President (Manitoba Métis Federation)
Ed Ducharme	Minister of Culture and Heritage
Rosemarie McPherson	Minister of Women's Issues (Métis National Council) and Spokesperson for Métis Women's Secretariat
Jennifer Brown	Minister of Youth Issues (Métis National Council) and Chair, Métis National Youth Advisory Council
Alan Morin	Minister of Environment (Métis National Council) and Treasurer (Métis Nation - Saskatchewan)

Additional Representatives

Phillip Chartier
Kris Gladue
Karen Collins
Gary Lipinski
Jason Madden

Congress of Aboriginal People (CAP)

Dwight Dorey , Chief
Patrick Brazeau
Jamie Gallant
Todd Russell
Mike McGuire
Lorraine Rochon
Grace Conrad
Betty-Ann Lavalle

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

Kukdookaa Terri Brown, President
Gina Dolphus
Clara Gloade
Elizabeth Asp
Cheryl Ward
Sherry Lewis
Sheldon Cardinal
Russell Vallee



National Association of Friendship Centres

Vera Pawis Tabobondung, President
Peter Dinsdale
Sylvia Maracle

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada

Marilyn Osecap, Chair

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Georges Henry Erasmus

Aboriginal Human Resources Development Council of Canada

Charles Coffey, AHRDC Champion & Ex V.P.

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada

Lisa Dutcher, President

Aboriginal Tourism Canada

Allan Luby, Chair

Aboriginal Sectoral Expert

Dr. Lisa Sterling

Aboriginal Youth Council

Jocelyn Formsma, President

Aboriginal Youth Network

Donita Large, Senior Communications Officer

Athabasca Tribal Council

Archie Cyprien, Chief

Canadian Aboriginal Science and Technology Society

Neil Jones, Executive Director

Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business

Jocelyne Soulodre, President & CEO

Indigenous Bar Association

Dianne Corbiere, President

First Nations Fiscal Institutions

Manny Jules

First Nations National Building Officers Association

Richard Jobin, Co-chair

Keith Maracle, Co-chair

Métis Settlement General Council

Harry Supernault, President

National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation

John Kim Bell, Founder and President

National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association

Elaine Chambers, Chairperson



National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

M.L. (Marty) Klyne, Chair

National Aboriginal Health Organization

Noreen McAteer, Chairperson

Native Mental Health Association of Canada

Bill Mussell, President

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs

Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, (Chairman) Prime Minister

Hon. Andy Mitchell, (Vice-Chairman) Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs

Hon. Jack Austin, Leader of the Government in the Senate

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of State (Public Health)

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Minister of State (Children and Youth)

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for Homelessness

Hon. Denis Coderre, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution

Hon. Joe Comuzzi, Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario)

Hon. Irwin Cotler, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

Hon. John Efford, Minister of Natural Resources

Hon. Stan Kazmierczak Keyes, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Sport)

Hon. John McCallum, Minister of Veterans Affairs

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan, Minister of Western Economic Diversification

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister Responsible for Official Languages

Hon. Geoff Regan, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Hon. Hélène C. Scherrer, Minister of Canadian Heritage

Hon. Joseph Volpe, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

Hon. Reg Alcock, (Ex-officio Member) President of the Treasury Board

Hon. Ralph Goodale, (Ex Officio Member) Minister of Finance

Hon. Anne McLellan, (Ex Officio Member) Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Hon. Jacques Saada, (Ex-officio Member) Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform



Other Members of Cabinet

Hon. David Anderson, Minister of Environment
Hon. Liza Frulla, Minister of Social Development
Hon. Joseph McGuire, Minister of Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
Hon. Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Industry
Hon. Andy Scott, Minister Responsible for CMHC
Hon. Jean Augustine, Minister of State Status of Women Canada

Parliamentary Secretaries

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (PS to the Prime Minister, Aboriginal Affairs)
Hon. John Godfrey (PS to the Prime Minister, Cities)
Hon. Sue Barnes (PS to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Aboriginal Justice)
Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (PS to the President of the Queen's Privy Council, Métis and Non-Status Indians)
Hon. Larry Bagnell (PS to Minister of INAC, Northern Economic Development)

Aboriginal Caucus (Government Members)

Senator Willie Adams
Senator Aurélien Gill
Senator Nick Sibbeston
Senator Charlie Watt
Nancy Karetak-Lindell, MP

Senators

Senator Maria Chaput

**Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs,
Northern Development and Natural Resources
(Government Members)**

Guy St-Julien, MP (Chair)
Stan Dromisky, MP
Raymond Bonin, MP



**PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS
SENIOR OFFICIALS (OBSERVER STATUS)**

Gerry Steele - Prince Edward Island
Judith Sullivan - Nova Scotia
Patricia Sawchuk - Ontario
Harvey Bostrom - Manitoba
Harley Trudeau - Yukon
Cynthia Dunnigan - Alberta
Christian Dubois - Québec
Donavon Young - Saskatchewan
Tom Jensen - British Columbia
David Omilgoitok - Nunavut

ELDERS

William Commanda
Elmer Courchesne
Ed Borchert
Reta Gordon

Assistants
Ramola Trebilcock
Marsha Smoke



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN

Prime Minister of Canada

Opening Speech

at the

Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable

April 19, 2004

Welcome to all of you. I would like to thank the elders who are with us today, in particular Elder William Commanda for his opening prayer and for inviting all of us to meet together here in traditional Algonquin territory.

I would also like to thank the Aboriginal leaders who have come from all parts of the country for this first-ever Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable.

Like you, I have been looking forward to this important day. A day which is the result of previous meetings we've had with the leaders of the five national organizations: the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples - all of whom are here today.

Canada would not be Canada without the Aboriginal peoples. Your distinct traditions, cultures and languages enrich Canada immensely.

First Nations have a special relationship with the land and rivers of Canada. In fact, the European settlement in North America arose because the First Nations were prepared to share their resources. It is now time for us to renew and strengthen the covenant between us.

There is also no question that we need to strengthen our relationship with the Métis community in Canada. It is time to recognize the contributions the Métis nation has made, and continues to make, to this country.

And it is of utmost importance that we recognize the unique culture, lifestyle and environment of the Inuit peoples - and their increasing contribution to the realization of our northern dream.



Canada faces no greater challenge than those that confront Aboriginal Canadians.

It is a challenge of enormous consequence - but not just for those of Aboriginal descent. It is also a challenge for the country as a whole.

Over half of Canada's Aboriginal population now lives in cities - a number growing by the day. Many are young Aboriginals moving in search of a job and a better life. And many are having trouble making the adjustment to the urban setting and to demands very different from the communities from whence they come.

If young Aboriginals don't succeed, then all of us fail. For too long, we have turned our backs on this moral and economic reality.

We cannot sidestep or ignore the demographic reality. Canada's Aboriginal peoples represent the fastest growing segment of our population, and Aboriginal children an important part of our future. Yet theirs is collectively a story of promise untapped and promises unfulfilled.

This cannot continue.

The Speech from the Throne stated that Aboriginal Canadians must participate fully in all that Canada has to offer, with greater economic self-reliance and an ever-increasing quality of life, based upon historic rights and agreements that our forefathers signed long ago, but that are not to be forgotten.

But, there is also a contemporary imperative. And that, too, must be recognized.

The sad and sobering fact is that we do not need economic indicators to see the difference in quality of life between the majority of Aboriginal Canadians and rest of Canadians.

Simply put, we must break the cycle of poverty, indignity and injustice in which so many Aboriginal Canadians live. We must make real improvements in their lives and living conditions. And all of this must lead to economic self-sufficiency.

How are we going to ensure success?

The answer is threefold.



First, we have to give ourselves clear goals - to reverse the course, and to bring new hope.

To be fair, tremendous energy and great efforts have been made in the recent past. But frankly, the results just aren't good enough. We have to go further. We have to do better.

The purpose of our goals must be to organize our every effort and focus our every response.

What should those goals be?

Clearly, they will include better health care and housing. More young people finishing high school; more going to university. More successful Aboriginal businesses; more economic development; greater self-sufficiency.

But whatever our goals are, they must be arrived at jointly, and they must be meaningful - and measurable.

The end result of our objectives, once we achieve them, must be to put an end to the terrible assumption that Aboriginal Canadians will always be a little - or a lot - worse off than other Canadians.

The second criteria to ensure success: We have to demonstrate the political will to get on with the job of achieving our goals and sticking to them come what may. As Prime Minister, I am here to say that you have my commitment - and that of our Government. Our will is resolute. Our focus will not falter.

Of course, political will is a two-way street. I would ask the Aboriginal leaders here and elsewhere to make a similar commitment and join with us in making dramatic change a tangible reality. To work with us and to work with one another. To put aside past problems and political rivalries so that we might achieve the dramatic progress we all want.

From our vantage point, we will ensure a full seat at the table - as we have ensured today - to Aboriginal communities and leaders. No longer will we in Ottawa develop policies first and discuss them with you later. This principle of collaboration will be the cornerstone of our new partnership.



The third element in ensuring success is that we must agree to a concrete plan to achieve our goals.

If the 8 billion dollars we spend each year is not doing all that it should - let's spend it better. If the way we're structured as a government isn't working, let's change it.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is doing good work. So, too, is the Métis Interlocutor. But government works across many different departments, and there is a need for better coordination - with the Prime Minister's Office helping in the process.

That is why our new Government announced the creation of a Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister. And I appointed a Parliamentary Secretary on Aboriginal Affairs.

We have also created a Secretariat on Aboriginal Affairs in the Privy Council Office to co-ordinate the Government's work.

But more changes are needed. For example, Inuit leaders have for years pointed to the absence of a secretariat in the government that focuses specifically on Inuit issues. And frankly speaking, there has been a gap on our part.

Well, we are fixing that. Today, I am happy to announce the creation of a new Inuit Secretariat within Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

In addition: Ministers need to ensure that their departments work in partnership with Aboriginal communities. And given the wide range of government programs, it is important that departments work in closer cooperation with each other.

That is one reason for the presence in great number today - of more than 40 Government of Canada representatives, including more than two dozen Cabinet Ministers. This is quite possibly the largest gathering of Ministers outside of the Cabinet room in decades. And they are here to carry our efforts forward.

In forming the new Government, I gave mandate letters to each Minister outlining what they were expected to fulfill. Now I am writing again to Ministers, instructing each to work in partnership with you and to discuss in advance important policy initiatives relevant to your areas of need.

Changes are also needed on your side.



Building capacity to achieve transparency, accountability and good governance is an important step towards Aboriginal self-government.

That is why we are creating the Independent Centre for First Nations Government. This organization will help to foster best practices in improving accountability and transparency, while developing principles of self-government. I know from my earlier discussions with Aboriginal leaders that you are committed to this.

So far we've been talking about machinery of government changes. Clearly, they are important enablers to achieving our goals. But they do not constitute a plan. Today - and in the days immediately following - we will work together on formulating that plan.

In this context, there are many issues we must deal with. But in discussions I've had with Aboriginal leaders across the country - six key areas have emerged that must form an integral part of the plan.

First, it is crucial that we support improvements in educational outcomes for our youngest generations of Aboriginal peoples - from kindergarten to grade 12. Aboriginal educators and leaders must be front and centre in this discussion. This is true on reserve. It is also true in urban centres.

This means supporting innovative measures, such as the development of First Nations school boards and Aboriginal educational institutions, to ensure the highest standards and the development of a curriculum that reflects the principles, values and histories of our Aboriginal peoples. Innovative measures are also needed in post-secondary education. The First Nations University in Saskatchewan is a model of what can be done in this regard.

Second, it is not enough to seek to improve the health of Aboriginal peoples generally; we must also recognize their particular needs. This will require capacity building in basic health administration at the community level to deal with the alarming rates of teen addiction, teen suicide, and the epidemic of diabetes that have plagued so many Aboriginal communities.

Third, we must create economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples both on and off reserve. We need to streamline and consolidate federal government programs. By making these programs more accessible, the barriers to employment will be reduced, while making the investment climate in Aboriginal communities conducive to partnership and entrepreneurship.



We must recognize that the development of our natural resources, so important in their own right, must at the same time be a tool for the economic development and job creation for Aboriginal Canadians. Indeed, in recent years we have made important strides in this area - but this can only be the beginning.

Fourth, we have to do better in the provision of adequate housing. We must advance alternative models for housing development on reserve, while working towards a national strategy to deal with housing issues off reserve.

Fifth, we must hold ourselves to account - in what we're doing well and what we're not doing so well. We need a manageable and transparent Aboriginal Report Card to set clear targets for achievement - and to measure our progress and success in getting there.

And finally: We need to find more efficient ways to conclude negotiations on self-government and land claims agreements. We cannot continue to leave these issues for the Courts to decide. Courts do not define relationships. People do - by working together on the basis of mutual respect and trust. And that is the course we must set.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today's Roundtable provides us with the opportunity to commit together on fundamentally improving the lives of Aboriginal Canadians.

Of course, we know that we can't do this alone. We need to work with provinces and territories and municipalities and with the private sector to build the new partnership required for our collective success.

We should not underestimate how much work we have to do. Nor should we pretend that it will always be easy.

We need to be ready to work hard and find creative solutions to obstacles.

But we can do it - as long as we work together and in partnership.

Today, in this room, we can take the first steps in strengthening this relationship. We begin a new era of cooperation.

Our new journey together will take some time. But our destination is too important to be missed.



Ours must be a society in which all citizens of Canada - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike - stand shoulder-to-shoulder; equal in opportunity, in dignity and in quality of life.

Let it be that, ten years from now, people will look back on this day and this Roundtable as an event that marked a truly new beginning for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. One that heralds a brighter, healthier and more prosperous future.

That is our ambition. And with a clear goal, the political will for change and a concrete plan, we will succeed.

Now, let's get started.

Thank you.



NATIONAL CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE

Assembly of First Nations

Morning Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you. Prime Minister, friends, first of all I want to thank the elders for their generous support this morning. I acknowledge the drum. Its presence here is an important statement of our values and traditions and teachings.

I want to thank the Algonquin people for acting as the host nation for this roundtable. Your hospitality reminds us all that Canada was once First Nations land. It is important to begin our discussions in the proper manner. Protocol and ceremony have been integral parts of our diplomatic relations for hundreds of years. It reminds us of our original relationship with the crown, a relationship founded on mutual respect and mutual recognition for one another as nations.

A government-to-government partnership was codified in the treaties, the wampum belts of our people and the covenant chain. Mr. Prime Minister, you spoke of the covenant chain when you appeared at the Assembly of First Nations national meeting in July 2002. The covenant chain evokes our treaties and our original relationship. It represents our common bond as we travel together across time and territory.

You told First Nations that it is time to polish our sacred covenant. It has become tarnished over the years. Our partnership is out of balance. First Nations people became subject matter, wards of the state instead of partners in Confederation. The legacy of this mentality is the *Indian Act*, residential schools, incarceration and poverty. But the treaties still stand. Their spirit and intent is very much alive. Our inherent rights remain within us and are enshrined in Canada's Constitution. The links of the covenant chain are still strong and we must use that strength to renew the relationship between Canada and First Nations. We believe in working together.

Part of our work must be aimed at reconciliation and healing. We strongly support the Aboriginal Healing Foundation which provides culturally appropriate remedies to survivors of residential schools. We would like to see that work continue.



Today can be a new beginning, an opportunity to develop a real and comprehensive plan for the future, a plan that brings action to the immediate priorities of our people while providing a framework for the long-term work on the fundamental issues before us. It does not serve us well to throw piecemeal policies at an uncoordinated system. We challenge Canada to work with us on a coordinated and comprehensive approach aimed at getting results.

A getting results strategy involves moving forward on three tracks: recognizing and implementing First Nations government based on nation-to-nation, government-to-government principles; securing the place of First Nations in Canada and the world by recognizing and promoting indigenous rights internationally; and smashing the barriers of poverty domestically and strengthening First Nation communities by raising the quality of life for First Nations.

There are compelling reasons to take action. Our population is young. More than half our people are under the age of 25. This is an opportunity for Canada. They are the workforce of tomorrow, the businesspeople, the artists, our leaders and bankers and, yes, the future Prime Minister. Canada's population is aging. But the First Nations population is coming of age. Our future is Canada's future. We must reach out to our people in all our communities. Contrary to popular belief, our population is fairly evenly balanced between people living on and off reserve. In fact, the latest census shows more First Nations people living on reserve than off. Our people in urban areas require a First Nations specific approach. First Nations governments are responsible for their citizens living off reserve and their citizens want to stay connected to their governments. This has always been our position and it is affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada. We will not allow others to either represent or jeopardize the collective rights of our people.

Regardless of where we live, we face shameful conditions - a reality acknowledged in the *Speech from the Throne*. There are many statistics, too many, that speak to this reality. All I need to say here is that our people are dying earlier and more often than anyone else in the country. We have a Third World in our front yards and in our back alleys.

Don't get me wrong now. There is hope.

I am filled with pride by the incredible resiliency of our people to survive as individuals and as peoples. We can attribute much of this strength to our elders, women and the hope of our children. That energy and vitality must be harnessed to build a better future for all of Canada.



I say to the people of Canada we need a cooperative agenda, one that identifies strategic and targeted investment. Some say too much is being spent. The official word is that government is holding the line on spending which only means that our people are falling further behind. When we look at the numbers, the trends are dramatic and disturbing. When you factor out lawful obligations and factor in population growth and inflation, federal spending per capita is declining. There has been a 7.4 percent decrease in total departmental spending since 1995/96. There has been a 13 percent decrease in essential services and programs since 1999/2000. And yet our leaders get an unfair burden of blame for mismanagement when many of them are trying to provide housing, health care and education on diminishing resources. I agree that the answer is not simply more money.

The system itself is broken. Let's fix the machinery.

The Auditor General's work is a solid starting point. Her findings on First Nations reporting, housing and economic development should be required reading for anyone in government. The Auditor General speaks of consolidating and coordinating resources so we get maximum return on our investments. She says we must assess programs based on their effectiveness, not just costs. Let's fix the current system and let's also be bold enough to imagine a new and better system. First Nations leadership will be the key to this work. Our partnership will require national dialogue, independent First Nations expertise, a federal government with a mandate for change, and joint national policy processes. This will help us realize our shared goals of transformative change. We need to move from *Indian Act* band governance into real First Nations governance with all the power and responsibilities that come with it.

A study out of Harvard University flagged the crucial elements of successful nation building and economic development: genuine self-rule, which provides First Nations the power to control what happens on First Nations lands; capable governing institutions that exercise power effectively, responsibly and reliably; and cultural match which means creating institutions that reflect our values. Leadership and strategic direction underlie all of these principles. This means we must work out arrangements for resource sharing and power sharing. As First Nations take on greater responsibilities and obligations, we will require the power to make our own decisions. This is, after all, what real governance is about.

Building First Nations governments requires a blueprint. Jurisdiction is the foundation upon which we will build our governments. Capacities, skills and education are the tools we will use to build the walls that support our governments. Self-determination is the roof that provides our people the hope to survive, develop and flourish. When this work is done, we will have rebuilt our home and secured our rightful place in Canada.



This is the vision that guides our getting results strategy. It is a comprehensive plan that deals with treaties and Aboriginal titles, resource and revenue sharing, justice and land claims, housing, health, education and the environment. I said at the start that we need a First Nations plan. Our Inuit and Métis brothers and sisters will speak to their own vision.

As Aboriginal peoples, we hold some common values and common priorities but we each have the unique cultural, legislative and historical dimensions that must be reflected in our approach.

Today is an opportunity to begin polishing the covenant chain to restore it to its original brilliance, to revitalize our historic partnerships in the modern world.

Thank you.



PRESIDENT JOSE KUSUGAK

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Morning Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Good morning. By the way, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami simply means Inuit United in Canada. Mr. Prime Minister, members of the cabinet, fellow Aboriginal leaders and distinguished guests, Inuit hope today is a turning point in our relationship with the federal government. Prime Minister, your remarks indicate we are moving in the right direction. Inuit pride themselves in working together and I can assure you we are here ready to participate and work with you to meet our mutual objectives. Inuit are more than first Canadians, we are also Canadians first.

Let me explain briefly when my first-born daughter Aliisa married a fine young fellow named Cedric tradition dictated that Cedric not only was added to our family but he became my Ninguak. This means he has been elevated to a higher level in our family than our daughter. Cedric's family also accepts and places my daughter on a higher pedestal. Similarly, Inuit are married to Canada. Canada is our Ninguak in Innu speak but in accepting Canada, we shouldn't have to worry about losing our identity or loving ourselves any less.

Sometimes I have wondered where Inuit fit in the Canadian family. In recent years, we have watched the Government of Canada moving towards an Aboriginal policy with a First Nations on reserve focus but it has been silent about Inuit. Prime Minister, during our recent meeting on March 11 when I pointed out that Inuit were consistently ignored in federal budgets and Throne Speeches, you acknowledged those oversights. And I want to thank you for that and recognize your commitment to adopt a different and inclusive approach for Inuit and all Aboriginal peoples.

Until today we have often found ourselves working in what many here may call a vacuum or what I prefer to call a uukkarujjaujuq. That's the term we use when we're hunting at the floe edge. You may have great success with plenty of seals, uktuk, whales or walrus and you're returning home then you realize you've been uukkarujjaujuq or cut off from the firm ice by open water and you can't cross. Our relationship with the federal government is something like that.



For the past several years I've felt we've been cut off. We've found ourselves moving back and forth at the political and bureaucratic floe edge, unable to see our land claim settlements fully implemented or our policy ideas fully considered. Inuit believe this summit signifies a shift in the winds and tides and we can see ice shifts providing a bridge towards firm ground.

To renew the relationship, we need an Inuit-specific strategy that includes a partnerships agreement and an action plan. Our proposal reflects the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Government of Canada's response, called *Gathering Strength*. In the past, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has not found our proposals acceptable but has also refused to say in a constructive way what would be acceptable. As you said, sir, today is not the time to complain about past practices but we have to show leadership if we are to move forward.

Inuit remain committed to concluding a partnership agreement. I urge the Aboriginal Cabinet Committee to consider our draft partnership agreement as the foundation framework to achieve Inuit-specific programs and policies. In the political development of the Inuit regions over the past 30 years, Inuit have successfully concluded comprehensive land claims agreements with the Government of Canada. These are modern day treaties negotiated by Inuit of Nunavik in Northern Quebec, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit of the Northwest Territories. All were ratified by Parliament and the Inuit of Labrador are soon to vote on their land claims agreement.

These agreements deal with lands, natural resources, environment, economic development and self-government. They are key to the relationship between the Government of Canada and Inuit. They provide tools, institutions and processes that both Inuit and the Government of Canada can use to improve our economic and social circumstances. But, as the auditor general reported, these agreements are not being implemented to full effect.

Last year Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples formed a land claims agreement coalition to encourage the government of Canada to adopt a formal policy on claims implementation. I am taking this opportunity, sir, to bring the coalition's materials to your attention and to express ITK's support.

Our land claims agreements are extensive and historic, but they do not absolve the Government of Canada of its political and jurisdictional responsibilities to Inuit for matters such health, housing and education.



Nor do they remove responsibilities for delivering government services. No discussion about the place of Inuit in Canada can be complete without examining the efforts Inuit have made to address issues in an international context.

Inuit communities are not isolated. Industrialized pollutants from all parts of the globe are carried by winds and ocean currents to the polar regions. And they find their way into the food chain and onto our dinner tables. These contaminants pose a real threat, particularly to the health of women and children. Inuit are already seeing adverse effects from climate change and our homelands are being visibly altered. In 50 years - within the lifetime of my grandchildren - depletion of summer sea-ice will cause the decline and displacement, perhaps even disappearance, of polar bears, walrus, and some species of seals. Let me be very frank: climate change will threaten the very existence of Inuit as a hunting society.

The Inuit circumpolar conference, representing the Inuit from across arctic countries, chaired by Sheila Watt-Cloutier - can you just show yourself a little bit there, ma'am, and there she is - has been instrumental in confronting environmental and sustainable development issues. This has included the creation of a northern foreign policy for Canada.

Inuit can add tremendous value to Canada's international efforts. As we all saw last week, Inuit rangers were instrumental in conducting Canada's longest ever sovereignty patrol to Ellesmere Island. Who better than Inuit to stand up for Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage? Inuit are also well positioned to persuade others to live up to the Kyoto protocol and to negotiate additional international agreements to reduce greenhouse gases.

Canada has embraced a northern dimension in its foreign policy, but has yet to develop a clear domestic Arctic Inuit policy. That is what we are talking about here. Only an integrated and Inuit-specific approach will address the social and economic conditions that place Inuit at the extremes of Statistic Canada's indicators: highest rates of unemployment, lowest income, highest cost of living, worst housing conditions, highest rates of communicable diseases, and shortest life expectancy. These painful social statistics result from poor and overcrowded housing, an education system that fails its students, health care that doesn't reach the sick in a timely way, and chronic unemployment.

These are the difficult issues that we and Pauktuutit struggle with every day. Inuit have played their part in developing their economies by creating jobs through land claim corporations. But we cannot solve these social issues alone.



As evidenced in the Speech from the Throne and its agenda for this meeting, health, housing, education and employment are among the federal government's Aboriginal priorities.

The Speech from the Throne also referred to the national oceans strategy and a northern economic development strategy. There is a direct connection between ocean strategy and the critical economic, environmental and health issues facing Inuit. The ocean strategy needs an Inuit-specific approach.

In addition, a northern economic development strategy must acknowledge the value and potential of broadband. The broadband technology is as important to the Inuit as CPR and St. Lawrence Seaway were to Southern Canada.

In summary, Prime Minister, Inuit welcome your commitment to do business differently. A new partnership with Inuit and Aboriginal people is long overdue. We must begin by examining our proposed partnership agreement to establish an Inuit-specific approach to the complex socio-economic issues that face our communities. As I said at the beginning, Inuit have embraced Canada as our Ninguak. Your commitments indicated you are equally willing to embrace us.

All of us should remember the recent visit of Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the resounding ovation he received when he said Canada is a shining example to the whole world for its commitment to multiculturalism. Prime Minister, I know you agree with me, that we cannot be a truly multicultural society if we insist on a melting pot for Aboriginal people. And you have done something about that this morning.

I thank you on behalf of Inuit for your remarks today about the Inuit Special Secretariat within the Department of Indian Affairs. I invite you to demonstrate your determination to live up to Secretary Annan's gracious assessment of Canada by taking concrete steps on the proposal Inuit have submitted to you.

Qujannamiik. Thank you. Merci.



VICE-PRESIDENT AUDREY POITRAS

Métis National Council

Morning Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Thank you. Good morning. Elders, Prime Minister Martin, ministers of the crown, fellow Aboriginal leaders and invited guests. On behalf of the leadership of the Métis Nation who are here today and the president of the Métis National Council, Clement Chartier, who is recovering from recent hip surgery, I bring greetings. For the Métis Nation, today is a historic and exciting opportunity to change the course of our relationship with Canada. It has been over a decade since Métis leadership had an opportunity like this to formally discuss our future with Canada. I would like to commend Prime Minister Martin for his leadership and vision in recognizing a new beginning is desperately needed.

And this new beginning comes at a time when there is a new reality for the Métis Nation and all governments in Canada. I speak of course of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R v Powley*. Not only did the highest court in this land unequivocally affirm that the Métis people have existing constitutionally protected rights, the law is very clear that all governments have an obligation to ensure Métis rights are recognized and accommodated in this country. *Powley* is just another affirmation of the Métis Nation's unique history, identity, culture and special relationships to our lands.

As a distinct people, we hold the inherent right of self-determination and aspire to fully implement Métis self-government within the Canadian federation. For centuries we have struggled with Canada - on the battlefield, in the political arena and in the courts to defend our nationhood, our lands, our rights and our culture. From the miscarriage of justice perpetuated by the Canadian state on our leader, Louis Riel, to a fraudulent land script system where our people were cheated out of their lands and driven from their homes, our people have never given up their rights or determination to be self-governing.

Unfortunately, the written and unwritten policies of Sir John A. Macdonald and successive unsympathetic governments continue to haunt our relationship with Canada. Today we are still witness to the shameful legacies of these policies.



No one in the federal government, not even the Federal Interlocutor, has a mandate to negotiate with us. The Métis Nation is the only Aboriginal people that is still largely a landless people within our own homeland. Ongoing jurisdictional bickering between Canada and the provinces, which has left us in limbo, as our children and communities fall further behind other Canadians and an ongoing strategy of attempting to deal with Métis as individuals rather than respecting our collective rights and well-established government structures.

While these realities have left our people cynical of government and the poorest of the poor in one of the richest countries in the world, the Métis Nation has never given up hope for a new relationship. In fact, these obstacles have served to strengthen our national resilience and resolve. Today we stand before you once again asserting our nationhood but on a different footing in light of the Powley decision.

Our governments, as the only democratic and legitimate representative bodies of the Métis Nation, are ready to begin the task of rebalancing political authority and resources in order to implement Métis self-government. Through our province-wide ballot box elections, our leadership receives their mandates directly from the Métis people. Canada must begin addressing the democratic deficit that exists within the Aboriginal community by starting to respectfully deal with Métis governments as governments. While advocacy groups, Aboriginal service delivery organizations, municipalities and industry will play a very important role within any initiative we undertake, Canada must respect the nation-to-nation relationship that exists between us.

To implement this nation-to-nation relationship, we, as the elected leaders of our respective governments, have the responsibility to define our relationship. Together we must enter a new era of proactive and results-oriented negotiations to arrive at mutually benefit agreements rather than continuing to be forced to use the courts at a social and economic cost of our people and all Canadians.

Through a proposed framework agreement between the Métis National Council and the Government of Canada, which will be tabled at this roundtable, the Métis Nation hopes to begin dealing with our priority issues that have frustrated the relationship and continue to force protracted litigation.

A priority within these negotiations will be to address the Canadian state-sanctioned injustice against Louis Riel. This stain on Canadians' history must finally be dealt with. However, a quick-fix pardon or exoneration is unacceptable. The truth must finally come out in order to truly begin the process of reconciliation between Canada and our people.

We also call upon Canada to finally deal with Métis veterans - the only veterans' group that remains to be dealt with. These brave men and women served with distinction



during Canada's hour of need only to be ignored and forgotten upon their return to this country. Time is of the essence to ensure Métis veterans are finally shown the respect and the dignity they so rightly deserve before justice can no longer be. The honour of Canada is at stake.

Finally, in order to truly transform the relationship, Canada must move past its pervasive programmatic stance in dealing with the Métis Nation. For us to avoid the failures of the past, the same federal bureaucracy that is responsible for the current state of affairs cannot be left to develop and implement new programming without us while thrusting accountability for their decisions upon us. We must be given real recognition, authority and responsibility to do what is needed. True, we cannot do it alone but Métis governments must have real ownership and decision-making authority over new initiatives in order to ensure transparency, accountability and value.

On this front, we must cut through the stove-piping and turf wars within the federal system. We must build upon the models that work like the extremely successful Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy. As a part of the recently-renewed strategy, the Métis National Council looks forward to signing a new national accord with Minister Volpe in the very near future.

In addition, throughout the roundtable we will be encouraging Canada to expand devolution best practice into other priority areas for the Métis people such as health and housing. Conversely, we must reject pan-Aboriginal approaches that have always failed miserably for the Métis people. While there is often a natural desire on the part of government to implement a once-size-fits-all model for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, this is no more feasible in the Aboriginal world than developing a pan-Canadian program that could not be properly tailored for the unique needs of the various regions of Canada. Similar to the respect that is shown for Canada's diversity, we must develop Métis-specific initiatives that deal with our unique realities as a people.

And finally, we must collaboratively develop an inclusive Métis-specific policy to be used throughout the federal system in order to achieve and measure results.

Prime Minister, on behalf of the leadership of the Métis Nation, we are willing and ready to rise to the challenge before us. Our people look forward to seeing real progress on the issues we discuss today. We thank you for taking the right approach of working with us and, as you said in your speech last Friday, let the new beginning start today.

Thank you very much.



THE HONOURABLE ANDY MITCHELL
Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Morning Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

First of all, I'd like to thank the elders, our ministerial colleagues, parliamentary colleagues who are here, Aboriginal leaders, ladies and gentlemen. And I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to also thank you for the work that you've done so far today and the work that we have in front of us for this afternoon.

The reality is, ladies and gentlemen, that we are making common cause here today. And we have a very important and critical objective. And to me from an overall standpoint, it is a very simple thing: we need to close the economic, social gap that exists between Aboriginal Canadians and Canadians in general. And as we move forward with our work, we move forward with our activities and our specific objectives, I think it's important that we always measure ourselves against our ability to do that, that we can say to ourselves that the actions that we are undertaking, the things that we are implementing, the things that we are doing will make the lives of Aboriginal Canadians better and that gap is being closed.

The Prime Minister said to us the last years have seen some successes, yes. But it has also seen so many opportunities lost, so many chances to move forward, not grabbed and taken. And the diminishment of that is not simply for Aboriginal Canadians as much as it is that but indeed it is the diminishment for all Canadians because the success of what we do here and the success of what we do in the days following this roundtable is to the benefit of not just Aboriginal Canadians, it's to the benefit of all Canadians. And that is the common cause in this room and that is the common cause that we must pursue across this country because it's for Canada, it's for Canadians, it's for us all.

Today we are talking about developing new approaches - as the Prime Minister says, transformative change, fundamental change. That's hard work because we have to do something very, very difficult yet very important.

We need to remember the past.

We need to understand it.
We must never lose it.



But at the same time, we need to shift our gaze forward and to chart that fundamental change, to chart that transformation that we want to make, building upon all of the experience, building upon our history and moving forward.

We talked this morning about building relationships - and they're critical because without the right relationship it'll be very difficult to succeed. But I believe that we need to have the discussion about relationships in the context of policy, that we need to be moving forward on those wide range of things that the Prime Minister said in terms of education and health and economic development and housing at the same that we're developing those relationships because the reality is we need to do both. It'll be difficult to have success achieving our housing objectives or our economic development objectives if we don't have the right relationship in place. And so I believe, ladies and gentlemen, we need to work at both and we need to work in parallel.

And the Prime Minister said as well, and I think this is important as we do our work this afternoon and from here forward, that we need to develop specific goals, measurable goals, goals that can be reported on because all Canadians - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians - will hold us all to account in the success that we are to have as we move forward. We should welcome that. We should welcome that scrutiny. We should welcome that transparency because I am convinced that collectively and together that we will succeed.

The Prime Minister has said we do need to do things differently. Somebody once said doing the same thing in the same way and expecting different results is a pretty good definition of insanity. Well, we're not insane and we will not fall into that trap. Where things have not worked, where the processes that we've developed have not been effective, where the machinery has not been conducive to progress, we will change them. We will not simply continue to do things in the same way and expect that there will be a different result.

And this effort must be inclusive. It must include governments from all levels. It must include the private sectors or unions. It includes all Canadians. It certainly includes all Aboriginal Canadians for the challenge is for all of us.

And we need to ensure, as the federal government and other levels of government, we need to ensure that we provide Aboriginal Canadians the tools that they need that reflects their cultural needs, that reflects their specific challenges so that they can pursue their objectives in a way that makes sense for them and not necessarily for what makes sense in Ottawa.



The Prime Minister said we need to have a new relationship and that's absolutely essential because the people who know best, the people who can chart our course the best, the people who can let us know the way to go are the people in this room and the people who you represent. It is Aboriginal Canadians themselves. There is no one who knows better the path that we need to tread.

I was particularly pleased to see the Prime Minister announce the new Inuit Secretariat within the Department of Indian Affairs and I want to assure you, Jose, that we will implement that in the short term and that we will implement it in consultation with yourselves, your leaders and your people so that as we begin that relationship, that new relationship, that transformative change that we are of our word that we will do it in collaboration and in conjunction with each other.

It's going to be important as we move forward that we don't simply talk in general terms but that we become specific, that we drill down, that we deal with the issues, the issues as they are happening in communities, the issues in a way that impact the daily lives of Aboriginal Canadians.

The Prime Minister in speaking this morning talked about education. He said there was no greater priority than our young people and he's right because although we have broad relationships, we also need to deal with the important groups within society. Our young people are one of those. Aboriginal women are another group with issues with items on the agenda that need to be addressed and need to be dealt with.

The Prime Minister mentioned education and we do need to deal with education. It is a starting point from where we can begin to make that transformative change. We do need to deal with K-12 education. We need to ensure that there is a standard right across Canada of what high school matriculation means whether that be within an Aboriginal context or a non-Aboriginal context.

We need to work on models. The Prime Minister suggested this morning and I'm prepared to work diligently on the creation of school boards within our Aboriginal communities.

This is something, though, that we need to do collectively together. This is something that we need to do with educators, with students, with the Aboriginal leadership to determine how these school boards may work and I'm quite prepared from INAC's perspective, if we believe it appropriate, to enter into some pilots to make sure that we're working on the right ideas.



And beyond K to 12 is the importance of post-secondary education. Somebody mentioned this morning that we had made some progress in achieving some graduates from post-secondary education and, yes, we have made progress but it is not yet sufficient. I think we need to work on ensuring that those who attend post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to stay there, have an opportunity to complete their studies. Too often the challenges that are faced by someone leaving their communities, oftentimes a small rural community, and travelling to a large, urban centre to obtain their post-secondary education on top of all of the demands of getting that education itself placed in front of somebody, all of those other issues that are there cause them many concerns and oftentimes does not allow them to complete their studies.

And again, I think we need to work collectively - the Aboriginal leadership, students, educators, the universities on developing programming that will deal with the retention of Aboriginal students in post-secondary institutions and I think that as a group we need to collectively work on determining whether new post-secondary institutions, new post-secondary Aboriginal institutions is a model that we may want to pursue.

The Prime Minister also spoke about housing. Housing has a negative impact not just on housing but on all of the other issues that we've talked about. It is so difficult to educate someone if they go home and they don't have adequate housing. How can you deal with the health of an individual if there isn't adequate housing?

And here I truly believe that we need to take a different approach. It hasn't been simply a lack of investment. There has been substantial investment in housing. But we need to make sure that our investments in housing result in what it is we want it to result in - new and better quality housing units.

We need to take an innovative approach but at the same time we need to remember that communities are different and that we need to structure that approach in ways that make sense for individual communities. In some places, social housing is going to be an important part of how we deal with housing. But in other areas, there are opportunities for innovative approaches and innovative partnerships.

I want to say here very clearly today to Phil, to the National Chief, that we're prepared to fund a Housing Secretariat within the Assembly of First Nations and that to work together with you and through CMHC and that we will work with you and CMHC to deal with housing issues on First Nations.

And I think that collectively we should be exploring the concept of a First Nations Housing Authority. There's been a lot of work done in that respect. There are a lot of



opportunities that present themselves and if you believe it a worthwhile exercise, I think we should proceed to examine that possibility.

In terms of economic development, the Prime Minister also spoke of that. And I think there's something that's very critical and very important that we do and that is to make sure that we consolidate across the government the approach that we take to economic development. There are so many windows, there are so many portals, it is oftentimes more challenging to choose where to go than it is to actually accomplish the job at hand. And the Prime Minister has made a very firm signal that he intends to see that consolidation.

Within the Department of Indian Affairs itself, we need to streamline the application process. We need to make it more efficient. We need to allow for approvals to happen more quickly while at the same time ensuring that those important accountability structures are there. And we need to explore new partnerships and new ways of doing things.

Today in Alberta with the ATC, the Athabasca Tribal Council, we are working with a completely innovative and new and exciting approach to economic development, bringing partners together who could never have imagined being partners in such an enterprise before - 18 private sector companies, the provincial government, the federal government and the Aboriginal First Nations communities working collectively to ensure that the development of the resource is being accomplished on behalf of Aboriginal Canadians and all Canadians, that they are sharing in the wealth of the land and that they are sharing in that wealth in a way that will ensure their long-term sustainability and survival. Negotiators have been working on this. They are coming close to success. And I can say from a federal perspective that we are prepared to support it and I believe it's an exciting model and one that can be used right across the country.

And finally, I would not feel comfortable in speaking if I didn't for a moment talk about governance because it needs to be an important part of the transformative agenda that the Prime Minister talked about. It's going to be an important part of about closing the gap.

We need to lift off of First Nations and First Nations leaders the archaic and overly administrative burdens that the *Indian Act* places upon First Nations people and First Nations leaders. We need to do that. And it's important that we need to do that.

In moving forward, I believe there are four essential ingredients that we must undertake. First of all, the National Chief and I have been working on this and that is the need to re-engage in a consultative process, a process designed in a manner and with the input of



First Nations and Aboriginal people that allow us to consult in a way where people are assured that their views and their priorities are reflected in the results, a consultation that has a time limit on it, a consultation that will work to a consensus and a consultation from which will come specific actions which we will deal with in an expeditious manner.

Secondly, as we move to make specific changes to the Indian Act, that we do it using the concept and the principle of optionality to ensure that individual First Nations are comfortable with the changes that are being proposed and take up those changes as they see them applicable to their particular circumstances. And of course we need to structure the changes to clearly demonstrate the bilateral relationship that exists between First Nations and Canada.

And finally, we need to understand the changes to the *Indian Act* are but an interim step, that they don't reflect the end of the journey, that they don't reflect our final objectives but rather reflect an opportunity to ensure that we have tools and that we have institutions that in the interim will allow for the economics and social success of communities because, ladies and gentlemen, in terms of governance our objective is self-government. It is ensuring that First Nations communities, that Aboriginal Canadians have an opportunity for self-government.

I believe it's important that we begin a dialogue. I'm talking about the principles. I'm talking about some of the fundamental issues on which to move forward in self-government because nowhere do I believe it's more important than to make transformative change than on the issue of self-government.

The pace at which we are moving is way too slow. At this rate we'll be halfway through this millennium before we accomplish that task and that is not acceptable. Collectively we can and must find different approaches.

We must find an expedited way to achieve this. As the Prime Minister said this morning, it should be not -- it is not up to the courts to establish relationships.

It's up to us to establish relationships and I believe that we have the will and the knowledge and the opportunity to accomplish just that.

Those are our agenda items, ladies and gentlemen. We will work on them this afternoon and, most importantly, we will roll up our sleeves.

Tomorrow morning we will begin the process of drilling down issue by issue, community by community to ensure that transformative change is achieved, to ensure that we are



taking concrete and specific action to close that unacceptable economic and social gap that exists between Aboriginal Canadians and Canadians in general.

Thank you very much.



THE HONOURABLE DENIS CODERRE

President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada,
Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians,
Minister responsible for La Francophonie, and
Minister Responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution

Morning Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Elders, Chief [Dwight] Dorey, Vice-president [Audrey] Poitras, National Chief [Phil] Fontaine, President [Jose] Kusugak, Kukdookaa [President Terri Brown], and I also want to acknowledge the work of Brenda Chamberlain, my Parliamentary Secretary for Metis and Non-Status Indians, Colleagues and Friends. Thank you for joining us here today.

As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, I want to acknowledge in particular Chief Dorey of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and Vice President Audrey Poitras of the Métis National Council, who is here today representing the MNC President, Clément Chartier, who was unable to attend today as he is recovering from surgery. I wish him well with a speedy recovery. I very much appreciate the participation here today of the MNC and CAP.

It is my pleasure to address this important meeting among Canada's national Aboriginal organizations and your representatives in the Government of Canada. We are all here with a common purpose and a common vision. That vision, as stated in the February *Speech from the Throne*, is to see Aboriginal Canadians participating fully in national life, on the basis of historic rights and agreements - with greater economic self-reliance, a better quality of life.

The world in which Aboriginal peoples and Canada have conducted ourselves has changed in significant ways. The face of Aboriginal Canada is no longer found only in remote and reserve communities. It is also found in every city, every town - especially in Western Canada - and, as everyone in this room knows, Aboriginal people will play increasingly important roles in the future well-being and prosperity of Canada.



Another significant change is the influence of the courts on the way we as a government address your issues as Aboriginal people. Most recently through the *Powley* decision, the environment in which governments and Aboriginal people operate has changed, as the Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that Métis people can hold constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights.

The third way that I see the world changing is in the area of improved federal-provincial and territorial collaboration. We are resolving our traditional jurisdictional wrangling with provincial and territorial governments, so that we can bring to an end the unfortunate situation where Aboriginal people are the “hot potato” of public policy and governments claim each other is responsible. Internally, the various departments and agencies of the Government of Canada are also learning to work better together, to use holistic, cross-cutting - or “horizontal” - approaches to Aboriginal issues.

The world has changed, and it is necessary that we move beyond the past so we can together make progress in the future. Today is about Turning the Corner, and I see three keys to turning the corner: inclusiveness, partnerships, and relationships. As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and as Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution I hope to contribute to these themes.

INCLUSIVENESS

The first key to turning the corner is inclusiveness. On Aboriginal issues, inclusiveness has a particular meaning. The Government of Canada needs to develop an inclusive Aboriginal agenda. To me, the term “Aboriginal” includes **all** Aboriginal Canadians: Métis, Indians - both status and non-status - and Inuit. Aboriginal people who live in urban areas, rural areas, and on-reserve. I think the term has become fuzzy and become a term of convenience - but we need to mean what we say when we say it. This is the language of the *Speech from the Throne*, and on this I believe there can be no debate.

I think our relationships with Aboriginal peoples have at times in the past leaned towards being paternalistic. We tended to do things **for** Aboriginal people rather than **with** Aboriginal people. I know that is one reason why the Prime Minister is very interested in pursuing a new Aboriginal engagement strategy. This engagement provides an opportunity to work together rather than enduring the conflict and confrontation of the courts.



In this regard, the February *Speech from the Throne* committed the Government of Canada to engaging with other levels of government and Métis leadership on the place of the Métis in its policies. This is a significant step forward.

So, with respect to the Métis, maybe we should start talking about Métis symbols, identification, and political and cultural institutions. I believe this to be a cornerstone to moving ahead, and one that should not be forgotten if we want to establish new and collaborative relationships.

Louis Riel is an integral part of the heritage of Canada: for some, he remains a controversial figure. For others, he stands as the first fighter for Métis rights within Confederation. But however he is viewed - from a political or a legal perspective - there can be no denying the strength of his convictions and the deep pride he generated among his people - the Métis.

PARTNERSHIPS

Inclusiveness contributes to better partnerships, which are the second key to turning the corner. Two areas in which the Government of Canada is making progress on both inclusiveness and partnerships are the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and on Economic Development.

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) provides seed funding to support innovative multi-partner pilot projects that address the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people in urban areas. The Government of Canada is using the UAS to begin to address socio-economic conditions among urban Aboriginal people while learning about innovative policy and programming ideas, and about what works in addressing urban Aboriginal issues. We are working closely in the eight UAS pilot project cities with provincial and municipal officials, with local Aboriginal people, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and others. By partnering in the UAS pilot projects, by engaging in interjurisdictional cooperation, and by working together, the Government of Canada is sharing the responsibility for addressing the needs of urban Aboriginal people.

Only by working together will we be able to achieve this goal. I am therefore pleased that the *Budget* announced an additional \$25 million to double the Urban Aboriginal Strategy's budget. With these funds, the Government of Canada will be able to meet our *Speech from the Throne* commitment to expand the successful Urban Aboriginal Strategy with willing provinces and municipalities.



The UAS is intended to be locally-designed and locally-driven through working with local urban Aboriginal communities. We are doing this because urban Aboriginal people have told us this is what they prefer. We are using these innovative approaches because research shows that these approaches achieve positive outcomes.

The UAS is helping governments learn how to work better together and with local communities. However, for initiatives like the UAS to really succeed, Aboriginal people have to work better together as well. We need you, as representatives of Canada's Aboriginal people, to come together with local urban Aboriginal people and their local organizations and work with us.

Economic development is another area where the Government of Canada can take concrete actions to respect Aboriginal people. In the West, for example, where the majority of Aboriginal people live, we know that natural resource development is booming, and companies are short on local people to hire. We also know that Aboriginal youth need support in training and transition to first jobs.

Working with provincial governments and the private sector, we can take advantage of these economic development opportunities to make strides with Aboriginal people, such as in Northern Saskatchewan and the Primrose Lake area. Doing so would be beneficial on several fronts: Aboriginal people acquire training and jobs; economic development has positive impacts - such as jobs and training for others and spin-off businesses - on regional economies; communities are brought together; and, the longer-term relationships that we want to build among other orders of government, Aboriginal peoples and the private sector are further enhanced.

Economic development opportunities are not just in the northern parts of provinces and tied to natural resources, they can be anywhere you look, such as in city centres. This is one area where I would like to see the Urban Aboriginal Strategy expand its efforts. We must become more pro-active with our partners and actively seek out opportunities with the private sector if we want to turn the corner, and secure a place for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

RELATIONSHIPS

Building on inclusiveness and partnerships, the third key to turning the corner is relationships. We need to build better relationships with Aboriginal people, with provinces and territories, and with others.

Indian Residential Schools continue to serve as a vivid symbol of the damaged relationship between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians. Addressing the legacy of over 100 years of residential schools is one of the most challenging areas for our



renewal and reconciliation as a nation. However, we must continue to address our collective past because our future as a just and inclusive nation relies on it.

Many of you attended residential schools. Many of you have family who attended residential schools and who continue to carry painful and difficult memories.

As a government, we have been confronted with the need to act more quickly and to be proactive.

We understand that the process of healing has not been completed, and that additional work needs to be done in this respect. We need to work collectively with Aboriginal Canadians and communities to determine the best approach to make healing a reality. I will need to work with my Colleagues to ensure that the most effective and appropriate investments in healing are addressed in the months to come.

So we have concentrated all of the government's resources to address the legacy of Indian residential schools in a new department - Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada.

The mandate of this department is to work in partnership with other federal departments, Aboriginal peoples, churches, provincial governments and other interested groups in implementing the federal government's wider objectives of healing and reconciliation and resolving issues arising from the residential school system.

In November 2003, we unveiled a National Resolution Framework. The Framework is an innovative, status blind approach to healing and reconciliation. Its centrepiece is an alternative dispute resolution or ADR process. It also provides for health supports and commemoration and a litigation option. ADR is the way of the future. It is a supportive and timely route to settlement of claims that promotes privacy and confidentiality.

I am the first to admit that we haven't done enough to communicate widely with communities and organizations about the ADR process. But you have my commitment that this Government will continue to get the message out.

I believe that, ultimately, the ADR process will be recognized as an innovative model in Canada and internationally as the leading edge in dealing with historical grievances and reparations. In fact, the ADR model has attracted international attention in Australia, South America and the Middle East.

The model is based on respect and dignity and it paves the way for improved partnerships, increased trust and mutual respect between Canada and survivors and ultimately, the Aboriginal community.



ADR was developed after extensive discussions with former students, their lawyers, Aboriginal leaders and church representatives. We continue to work closely with survivors and the leadership of national Aboriginal organizations to ensure issues and concerns about ADR are jointly examined and addressed. We believe this process underlines our profound commitment to a new way of doing business and emphasizes renewed dialogue and collaborative policy development.

ADR is not perfect but it is a good option. We will continue to work in cooperation with Aboriginal communities to develop possible improvements.

Dealing with the legacy of residential schools will continue to present challenges. We need to confront the challenge to our relationships presented by our decision to appeal *Blackwater*. The decision to appeal *Blackwater* was a correct one on many levels. The appeal sends a strong message about deterrence and ensures that non-profit organizations such as churches are responsible for the actions of their employees. However, as you have heard this morning, the damage done to our relationship with the Assembly of First Nations and, more importantly with survivors themselves, cannot be calculated.

How can we balance tough decisions such as the appeal of *Blackwater* with the reality that survivors confront? They are elderly, they are confronting illness, they are being re-victimized by the very system we believe is here to help them.

We also need to improve our relationship with the Métis. Since the time of Louis Riel, Métis people have had to fight for their rights. And on September 19, the Supreme Court of Canada released its first ever ruling on Métis Aboriginal rights. The *Powley* case affirmed that Métis are a distinct people that hold collective Aboriginal rights - "a full-fledged rights-bearing people". The *Powley* decision was a watershed in relations among Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada. We recognize the truth of that decision, and are turning the corner, renewing the relationship. This decision has changed the nature of our relationship with Métis people. We are committed to continuing to work with the provinces, territories and Métis organizations to address the implications of this decision.

Currently, the Government of Canada is engaged in multilateral discussions. We are working with provincial governments and the MNC leadership to respond to the Supreme Court's decision. These discussions are significant, in that they bring together for the first time in many years all the partners necessary to effect the kind of changes suggested by the *Powley* decision. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Canada has committed \$20.5 million in this year's *Budget* towards facilitating a response to the *Powley* decision.



I am also pleased to confirm my commitment to holding a Ministers and leaders meeting as soon as we can arrange it. The work on responding to the *Powley* decision is a great illustration of the Government of Canada's new approach to these issues - working together by sharing responsibility.

In the time since the *Powley* decision was handed down, we have also received tremendous cooperation from President Chartier and the Métis National Council, and I thank them for their support in encouraging our fellow Canadians to behave responsibly and cooperatively following the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on *Powley*. In the east, Chief Dorey and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples have also played a role in responsible messaging and I thank them for their cooperation.

Today must play a role in building better relationships with the national Aboriginal organizations. As Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, I have special relationships with two national Aboriginal organizations, CAP and the MNC.

Since becoming Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians last December, I have been consistently impressed by Chief Dwight Dorey and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. CAP often provides the Government of Canada with creative ideas, especially in labour market and training strategies. I sincerely hope that CAP will continue to offer these innovative solutions to issues confronting off-reserve Aboriginal people, and I look forward to working with CAP to bring these ideas into Government policy thinking.

The other national Aboriginal organization with which I have a special relationship is the Métis National Council. The MNC have welcomed me into their communities and shown me what the western Métis are all about. Our strong bilateral relationship has contributed to a smooth transition over the Fall harvesting season when the *Powley* decision came down and into the multilateral discussions with provinces on *Powley* to address Métis harvesting. The MNC enjoy a good relationship with many federal departments as evidenced by their accord with HRSD and their work with Health Canada to name a few examples.

But it is not only the Government of Canada that needs to improve relationships. We need Aboriginal groups to also work with each other. We will never achieve the Prime Minister's vision of seeing Aboriginal Canadians participating fully in national life unless Aboriginal people work together towards this vision.

For the Government of Canada, the importance of relationships does not end with Aboriginal people. The Government of Canada needs strong, trusting relationships with provinces, territories, and other partners.



We have to adjust to the reality that a majority of Aboriginal people are living off-reserve, and that our responsibility does not end at the reserve boundary.

I believe that the language of the *Speech from the Throne* - about the harm that “jurisdictional wrangling” between federal and provincial governments has caused Aboriginal social conditions - will help move the Government of Canada in the direction of “shared responsibility” to address Aboriginal issues. I am firmly of the view that many provinces are ready for this type of approach. And I think we collectively need to embrace it wholeheartedly.

As federal, provincial, and territorial governments, we need to find the ways to get beyond sterile and paralyzing arguments about jurisdiction and buck-passing, to work in constructive partnership with Aboriginal people and with each other - to help make a real difference in the quality of life for Aboriginal people. Greater intergovernmental program coherence, and in some cases integration, is needed.

CONCLUSION

As governments and as Aboriginal peoples, we live today in a changed world from that which used to be. A vast majority of Aboriginal people live off-reserve, and many Aboriginal people move from on-reserve to off-reserve - often back and forth. The *Powley* decision has changed the world of Aboriginal rights by affirming that Métis **are** a rights-bearing people. And the jurisdictional squabbling of the past is diminishing.

The Government of Canada has 30 years of relations with the five national Aboriginal organizations - Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Métis National Council, Assembly of First Nations, Native Women’s Association of Canada, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami - and today is a great opportunity to begin a renewal of these relationships. It is crucial that, as a government, we keep a broad horizon so we can have, inclusiveness, partnerships, and relationships with all Aboriginal people.

I believe that we - all of us - have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of those Aboriginal people who are not presently fully sharing in our nation’s good fortunes. And I think that today marks a good start in Turning the Corner, in inclusiveness, in partnerships, and in relationships.

Thank you.



THE HONOURABLE ANDREW TELEGDI
Parliamentary Secretary on Aboriginal Affairs

Afternoon Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Thank you very much. Elders, leaders, young people, friends and colleagues let me start by saying that some of the Cabinet ministers are missing because question period has started. And they have taken leave to answer questions, but they will be back as will the Prime Minister.

When Elder Commanda talked about how the First Nations welcomed the French and the English to share this great land of Canada I thought about how I arrived as a Hungarian refugee in 1957 with my parents, an older brother and a sister. On our second day in Canada we attended a powwow in Stanley Park in Vancouver. As a young boy I was fascinated. As a refugee I have had a keen interest in human rights. My good friend the late hereditary chief Buddy Recalma from Qualicum, BC who passed away seventeen months ago taught me that the first human rights activist in Canada were the original people. He gave me a lapel pin that commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the native brotherhood of British Columbia and it's one that I wear with pride and it gives me courage as well as inspiration.

We met many times but Chief Recalma, Aboriginal leaders in British Columbia with the Prime Minister who was finance minister at the time. So in case you wonder how a Hungarian refugee ends up being Parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister on Aboriginal affairs that is essentially how that has happened.

I was most impressed this morning with the discussion on strengthening relationships and finding innovative ways of working better together. As I went from room to room what struck me most were the various bold ideas that the groups were generating. Clearly the status quo is not acceptable and you could sense the collective commitment to do better.

It is my hope that such transformative thinking continue throughout the afternoon sessions as we make progress on relationships in some key areas.

There are two goals for the afternoon session.



First to discuss initiatives that we are working on and how we can build on successes while exploring new ideas that will result in marked improvements in the lives of the Aboriginal people.

The second is to consider some concrete steps that we can make together to move forward on these policy priorities.

The policy area that we will be looking at this afternoon are economic development, education, health, housing and achieving results which includes planning, measuring and reporting.



NATIONAL CHIEF DWIGHT DOREY

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Afternoon Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Thank you Minister. I'd like to first of all begin by just expressing my thanks and appreciation to our elders for the opening and as well as the drummers. I must also for the record express disappointment in the fact that the Prime Minister is not here as well as other members of Cabinet as you pointed out to hear the presentation by my organization. And I would hope in the future that that situation would be rectified.

Before going on I'd also like to take the opportunity to suggest that we all take a moment and just think about how we got here. It's an unfortunate situation that Clément Chartier could not be here because of ill health. There are other people who have served us well in the past such as Harry Daniels who due to ill health is unable to be here, and then there are others who have gone on to their next journey. People like Wilf Peltier, George Manuel, Mary Two Axe Early and as well Richard Hatfield and Joe Ghiz. These are people who helped get us at this table, and I think we need to acknowledge that.

Getting into the issue, the Prime Minister has asked me to lead off the discussion this afternoon on policy priorities and the need to achieve results. We all bring our own perspectives to this task of setting priorities and taking measures to track and improve the results. I represent one of the national Aboriginal representative organizations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. So I bring a perspective that speaks for the interests of Aboriginal people outside of the reserve system and Métis people as well across the country.

Most are living in urban areas but many live in rural and remote communities as well. The people I speak for are often called the forgotten people. And this speaks directly to what I want to say about priority setting. And about achieving and measuring results. I believe that we must get the fundamentals right. This is the first priority. What do I mean by the fundamentals? I will highlight four principles that I see as guiding any successful effort to reach the social, economic and cultural needs of all Aboriginal peoples.



The first fundamental is to challenge many of the assumptions built into the status quo, and we must be honest about that. As the Prime Minister has stated, much of what passes for policy now applying to Aboriginal peoples has failed because those policies have been designed for us instead of with us.

Repeated governments have simply adopted their own assumptions about who we are. And what we need. And they have failed to test these assumptions against reality or against what our communities are asking for. Most people in this room know the kind of assumptions that do the most harm.

One is about who real Indians are and who real Métis are. There is a belief that real Indians live on reserves and follow a traditional or tribal lifestyle. This assumes of course that success in the mainstream involves abandoning in our identities, our cultures, and our unique standing as founding peoples of Canada. Most current urban policy is based on the assumption that Aboriginal people congregate in cities because they can't get the services they need on reserves or in the rural areas.

This is a myth.

Migration to the cities has been going on for many decades and at a relatively constant rate. The reality is that the urban Aboriginal population boom is not due to migration, but to natural increase, people putting down roots and raising their families. Understanding this most basic fact is essential before considering what we need to do to address the urban Aboriginal challenge.

Urban Aboriginal people have the same ambitions to participate in the design and delivery of services as their cousins on reserve or their non Aboriginal neighbours next door. But in our cities the myth of Aboriginal migration has denied them that opportunity. Aboriginal people want to participate in wider economic, social and cultural lives that is enjoyed by other Canadians. But they will not be successful and cannot be expected to succeed as long as they are denied the opportunities and the tools to enable cultural integrity and community survival.

Another assumption that plagues us is that our communities, fractured and fragmented by imposed ideas and assumptions in play for almost two hundred years can simply reform and reestablish ourselves with little or no assistance.

And no consequences to the basic structures of government and society.



In dealing with false assumptions the best answer is open and honest dialogue. It also means taking risks. We must open up to any and all who can contribute, not just those who agree or support us. Canadians have courage. We pride ourselves as Canadians on being peacekeepers and democracy builders all around the world. We need to turn that same pride inward.

The survival of our communities is the number one challenge facing all Aboriginal people and us here today. We have been subjected to sustained efforts at social and economic assimilation for too long to ignore the affects. To reverse that trend will not just take resources and commitment, it will take time. It also means we must replace assumptions, myths and outmoded beliefs with reason, with dialogue and with cooperation.

The second fundamental is one that the government's Speech from the Throne echos. We must be accountable to people, not jurisdictions or jurisdictional systems in which we have no voice or influence. Our constituents, urban, reserves, rural or remote, status or non status all live in families which need to have the support of their communities without distinction, without discrimination, free of jurisdictional barriers.

This fundamental must apply across the board for social, educational, health and economic development initiatives to be successful. However we can't pretend that jurisdictional jockeying will stop overnight. Our organizations have been trying for over thirty years with very limited success.

The jurisdictional hurdle is not just a federal provincial one, it is also on an on reserve off reserve one and a status and non status one, and a First Nation Métis one. Where it makes sense to focus on the unique problems facing reserve communities Inuit or Inuit Métis in the north or Métis in rural Ontario or northern Saskatchewan then that is the focus that should be given. But if the focus is on national programs for health or education the focus must be status and residency blind. It must not fragment families and communities any longer.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal people gave us some solid directions about how to get around these hurdles, most of which haven't even been tried. One recommendation was for accountability by national level institutions to be a pre-condition for negotiating self-government in modern treaties. Most of the self-government tables up and running right now ignore that step, and they are failing as a result. After spending sixty million dollars on that Royal Commission perhaps it's time we tried on some of the other recommendations. The Congress has very specific proposals to build on in this respect, one of which is an Aboriginal authorities act.



Thirdly, we simply must deal with the *Indian Act*. It is not enough to talk about getting to it down the road, or maybe starting on that after we address something else, it is essential, it is central to the problem and it must be addressed now. As a Mi'kmaq and a father I am deeply offended that my children have to meet some 19th century European idea of racial purity to obtain education assistance if they need it. Or avoid being arrested for fishing for their necessities. By what logic does such an act exist in the 21st century. And by what logic should Canada tie the flow of dollars or access to rights to impose artificial concepts of racial identity and community existence.

Continue to tolerate this deeply offensive legislation only worsens the hurt and extends the damage. This is a message that each and every First Nation person must accept the responsibility to deal with. Too many of our own decisions are made with an eye to status or with concerns about division of the pie, and protecting positions propped up by *Indian Act* distinctions. Anyone who believes we can achieve the goals of self government and self reliance for Aboriginal peoples without upsetting any apple carts, without breaking any eggs needs a reality check. Renew the relationship and achieving results means we must deal with the legislation that has plagued us for one hundred and fifty years, the *Indian Act*.

A fourth fundamental builds on something the Prime Minister said the other day in Toronto. And I quote "Opportunity is less likely these days to be found, it must be made", unquote. Making opportunities means setting clear targets and objectives and setting them jointly. The targets must have meaning and tangible reality to the communities and to the individuals. We must speak in clear terms of how many jobs we should be creating. Where will those jobs be created. In what sectors. What financial and planning and training steps will have to be put in place to create those jobs and to fill them. We need to focus on affordable healthcare by stripping away barriers to equitable access for those in need. We can set specific targets for new urban and rural Aboriginal housing just as we did before off reserve housing was cancelled a decade ago. Certainly we can agree to set clear targets for the education of our children, our real opportunity for the future lies with them. Targets that focus us all on what matters. It's the lifelong power to learn and to grow. Targets that abandon inequalities between Aboriginal people, and targets that focus on need and sponsor success.

Making opportunities also means accepting that governance and self government go hand in hand with responsibility. Canada achieved responsible government well over a century ago and did so largely on the strength of the wealth obtained from Aboriginal lands and Aboriginal resources. Those resources were something bought, but most often they were, well let's say borrowed.



Our institutions and government on and off reserve, urban and rural can only make opportunities happen if we also increasingly generate within our own communities that wealth.

For real opportunity we must get our people working. To get our people working and to govern responsibly we must accept the need to raise our own revenues. Meaning, measuring results is the other half of this equation. We all need report cards. We all need to know where things are going wrong. As well as when and why they are going wrong. Or going well. For this I call for a set of clear time frames and clear mechanics for reporting. The 25th anniversary of section 35 in the Constitution is coming up in 2007 and would that not be a very good target for some real deliverables. We must not only honour the promise of section 35, we must keep that promise and make it real. Our time frames and reporting rules may be appropriate for policy targets in health, housing and education sectors but time frames are essential. And this means annual as well as mid and longer term monitoring, evaluation and reporting obligations.

In this area the Prime Minister has undertaken to support our organizations with new capacities and reporting on progress. And we must take steps to report on our own progress individually as Aboriginal organizations and governments, as well as track and report on the performance of Ottawa and the Premiers.

In closing I want to stress points where agreement on fundamental seem essential if we are going to set achievable priorities through this process, and account for the results. Once again the four fundamentals I suggest are straightforward.

One, we must be accountable to those to whom we deliver services and represent the negotiating right. Accountability can't come without nation building investments, without institutional reforms in Aboriginal country as well as in government.

Number two, we must take our focus on issues and problems relevant to success and relevant to results based accountability. Most social and health based programming outside of a reserve context for example must not splinter families and communities by using irrelevant eligibility restrictions or putting the planning and delivery functions in the hands of those not accountable to that community itself. Participation in planning and delivery must be holistic and it must be inclusive.

And number three, we must agree not to tolerate or extend even by so much as a year the divisive imposition of the *Indian Act's* race based definitions of who we are. Finally, we must make opportunities and measure our performance by setting clear goals and agreeing to open, critical and regular reporting to our people and to all Canadians.



I want to thank the Prime Minister at this moment for his clear evidence that he understands the challenge of true equality and is asking why not.

And with that I thank you all for your attention and I look forward to the continuation of our equal and equitable participation in this process.

Thank you.



PRESIDENT KUKDOOKAA TERRI BROWN

Native Women's Association of Canada

Afternoon Speech
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

I would like to begin by introducing our women who travelled from very remote communities across the country to be with us today. Our first on my left is Gina Dolphus. She's the vice president of the Native Women's Association and the president of the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories. And then we have the one and only Clara Gloade, Clara is the secretary of NWAC and she's the president of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. And Elizabeth Asp, she's the president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. Cheryl Ward is a youth member from the New Brunswick Aboriginal Women's Council and our youth rep to the Native Women's Association Youth Council.

And I want to begin by bringing you greetings today from the Native Women's Association of Canada. Good afternoon everybody. It is an honour to be here meeting with the Prime Minister who is not here in his chair right now and other Parliamentarians and our brothers and sisters from the National Aboriginal Organization for this historic Canada Aboriginal People's Roundtable.

The Native Women's Association of Canada views this meeting as an opportunity to further the relationship between the federal government and Aboriginal peoples, and to ensure that the voices of First Nations and Métis women are heard when developing future Aboriginal policy in Canada. We would like to acknowledge the Algonquin people for welcoming us to their territory.

In the short time I have to speak today I'm going to briefly outline our position on the following issues. Our *Sisters in Spirit* campaign, Aboriginal poverty and the policy priorities for this afternoon's agenda, economic development, education, housing and health. The *Sisters in Spirit* campaign aims to increase public awareness and education levels about the alarming high rates of racialized violence against Aboriginal women. All too often leading to their disappearance and deaths. We estimate that over the past thirty years approximately five hundred Aboriginal women have gone missing in communities across Canada. We are in an urgent state of affairs in regards to the safety of Aboriginal women. We request that the federal government commit to provide a fund of ten million dollars to implement the *Sisters in Spirit* campaign.



This year the Native Women's Association of Canada will need resources to develop a strategic plan that would be implemented when this commitment is made. This plan will include research, education and community based programs to assist marginalised Aboriginal women vulnerable to this extreme form of violence. Time is of the essence in this situation. Immediate action is required to stop the needless killings of Aboriginal women in Canada and I'm pleased to mention that I met with the National Chief on Friday and he has lent us our support on this issue.

In regards to poverty, in the recent Throne speech it was stated that condition in far too many Aboriginal communities can only be described as being shameful. We applaud the government of Canada for acknowledging the severity of the socioeconomic problems facing Aboriginal people. Many studies have found that Aboriginal peoples in this country are living in developing world conditions. From an Aboriginal women's perspective the findings are particular harsh. Poverty amongst Aboriginal women is greater than that of Aboriginal men by significant margins. Forty three percent of Aboriginal women live in poverty compared to thirty five percent of Aboriginal men. Poverty impacts over half of Aboriginal children in Canada. Fifty two percent of all Aboriginal children are poor.

The rate of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth has reached levels of more than ninety percent in some communities where Aboriginal population is less than ten percent. Sadly these children are more easily exploited because they lack basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. Poverty in Aboriginal communities must become a priority for this government. Canada must work with the national Aboriginal organizations in order to develop a strategy to alleviate the abject poverty we're facing in our communities that is a significant contributor to the extremely high levels of violence and death faced by Aboriginal women.

And on the policy priorities for this roundtable economic development can play a role in improving the poverty rates and the rates of violence against Aboriginal women if a holistic approach is taken and the multiple factors of oppression against Aboriginal peoples are addressed in a comprehensive way. However, this has not been the trend in recent times. Instead of moving forward on addressing economic development for Aboriginal women the federal government has actually reduced spending in this area. The Native Women's Association of Canada experienced human resources skills development Canada funding reduction by five hundred and two thousand dollars. Cutbacks reduce the ability of our organization to address the employment and training needs of Aboriginal women. The Native Women's Association of Canada receives point seven percent of the total funding under this agreement, despite the fact that Aboriginal women make up fifty three percent of the Aboriginal population. It is imperative that Aboriginal women's organizations are central to the implementation of these types of strategies if changes to action of women's socioeconomic status are realized.



Concretely then the Native Women's Association of Canada calls upon the federal government to reinstate or increase our levels of funding so that the economic development needs of Aboriginal women in Canada can begin to be adequately addressed. This type of action will set apart Prime Minister Martin from past leadership as a Prime Minister willing to go beyond the rhetoric of promises to improve the status of Aboriginal peoples in Canada to make this an actual reality. We urge you to meet this challenge and work in partnership with our organization and the other national Aboriginal organizations.

Housing, there must be a national Aboriginal housing strategy developed using a process that includes Aboriginal women's organizations. Matrimonial re property on reserve must be addressed. On education, education is the solution to poverty. Increase education funding to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples is essential. There must be changes to INAC education policies. Gendered racism facing Aboriginal women results in barriers to seeking employment even where individuals hold requisite educational qualification. Without addressing systemic barriers the benefits of post secondary education will not be fully addressed.

Health, lower socioeconomic status of Aboriginal women requires gender specific approaches to existing health initiatives. There must be more gender specific health studies. Accessible services for rural, remote and northern communities.

In conclusion these forums for dialogue between Canada and national Aboriginal organizations are important and heartening to the Native Women's Association of Canada. They represent opportunities for Aboriginal representative organizations and the Canadian government to develop policies in partnership among one another in a meaningful way.

It is vital that the Aboriginal women's organizations be included in processes designed to address all issues affecting Aboriginal peoples, people including self government, justice and health as well as insuring that legislative changes are a priority.

It is imperative that the results of these discussions are implemented.

The Native Women's Association of Canada looks forward to a renewed and revitalized approach developing concrete steps that includes Aboriginal women's voices. We need to be vigilant in calling Canada to account and ensuring that the partnerships formed here today result in positive changes to the lives of our women and our families.

And with that I thank you.



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DENIS CODERRE &
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ANDY MITCHELL

Closing Remarks
at the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Denis Coderre

People from the five organizations, Métis, Inuit, women, First Nations, if you're off or on reserve are all first class citizens and we are willing to do our part. Today we spoke a lot about quality of life. Today we spoke a lot about people and that's what's the greatest thing.

Mr. Prime Minister, this day was a success where we had first an opportunity to talk a lot about governance, relationships, partnerships, inclusiveness to ensure that we can all work and act with a common purpose.

This afternoon, we talked in more detail about economic development, education, health, housing, but particularly about achieving results. When we're talking about achieving results, when we're talking about housing, when we're talking health, we're talking about the prevention, healing and find a way to prepare our future generations to give them hope, to give them support and make sure that with our elders at the same that we're also focussing on bringing all the people together but we have to talk also about economic development. We need to find a way to build that kind of inclusive partnership where everybody will do their part.

So, Prime Minister, I would say that as your Interlocutor for the Métis and non-status Indians, as your Interlocutor also for residential schools, I was personally very pleased to see that we had some fructuous discussions, great first step in the right direction and we can't wait for tomorrow so we can start to get down to work.

I hear from my Métis brothers and sisters about the recognition, about their priorities, about the symbol, about the importance to work together, to work on the representativity, to make sure that we're focussing on the people but at the same that we respect the governance.



I hear other brothers and sisters from on and off reserve who want to be full part of the process, people from CAP, of the Native Women Association of Canada, which is an essential element. We have to work respectfully to help our mothers play their roles to protect and benefit from the wisdom of native women in this process.

And finally, I would like to thank my colleague Andy Mitchell where we witnessed his leadership, his dynamism and I would like to thank also Prime Minister Martin to give us that opportunity to have that tremendous day so we can all make a difference. We can say that today we turned a corner. So thank you very much, it's been a privilege, it's been an honour and I turn the mic to my co-chair Andy Mitchell.

Thank you very much.

Andy Mitchell

Thank you very much Denis, Prime Minister, all of those here participating. Let me extend to you our deep thanks and appreciation for the effort and the energy that you have put in to this day.

I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to also thank all of the people who have worked behind the scenes, some of them now for several weeks, in putting this together from both the part of the Aboriginal organizations as well as from the Government of Canada for all the fine work that they have done and I very much appreciate all the effort that they have put forward.

I think that we've accomplished a significant amount today. We've learned some things Prime Minister. I think one of the things that we learned and when we proceed with those further meetings and sectorial discussions we'll make sure to give the opportunity to drive even deeper into the subject matters to provide the time necessary to get those things done and we'll make sure that we take lessons learned from the approach that we did today. As we proceed there are three overall ways in which we're going to proceed and they're based on the comments that you Prime Minister made this morning.

First of all in terms of strengthening the relationship, I think that we had excellent conversations this morning about that and as the Prime Minister has asked between the Government of Canada and the national organizations we need to chart a path, we need to understand our goals and objectives and we need to understand the strategies to achieve those and to make sure that we come to a consensus and an understanding of where it is we want to go.



In terms of some of the specific issues, in terms of health and education, economic development and education, the Prime Minister has asked his Ministers to move ahead on sectoral discussions so that we can ensure that we develop the strategic approach that will achieve the improved outcomes in terms of health, that we will have increased attainment in terms of education, that we will have better and more effective investments in economic development and that we will graduate even more and more Aboriginal Canadians out of our school system.

Those sectoral discussions I know that my colleagues are committed to and to ensuring that it takes place. Finally, as a third aspect of this Prime Minister is the determination, your determination and direction that we need to ensure that those goals, that those objectives are expressed in a way so that Canadians can determine our progress, that we have an opportunity to report on it. We need to clearly define those goals. For instance, for National Chief Fontaine and myself, self-government is an important goal for us to achieve and there are many others that we need to enunciate and to move forward on. One of the absolute determinant things that we've said here today Prime Minister and you've said it many times is the absolute necessity to move forward in a collaborative way.

These are solutions that are not going to come exclusively from Ministers or ministries. They're not going to come from the federal government or provincial or territorial governments. They're going to come collectively between us with the full participation of Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal people. That is an absolute commitment that we have as the Government of Canada. What that means is as we embark on that collaborative approach, as we consult, as we have dialogue, we do so with an open slate, not with a prejudice of what the outcome may be, not with a preconceived notion of where we will end up but rather with a determination to listen carefully, to hear the views and the perspectives and to with you build a consensus on the solutions and the means to implement and achieve those solutions.

That is what we are committed to do, that is what we are determined to do and that is what I believe we have to do if we are to achieve success.

So in closing, let me once again thank all of you and particularly you Prime Minister for your vision and determination to have this meeting, for your vision and determination in placing this file and these issues front and centre in your government. It's not done without some risk, it's done I know because you believe it's the right thing to do and I know your members of your government share that view.



**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN,
PRIME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA &
NATIONAL CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

Press Conference
following the
Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Rt. Hon. Paul Martin

Good afternoon. First thing that I would like to do is to thank all the Aboriginal leaders again, the representatives, the experts who've been here, my cabinet colleagues who participated in today's roundtable. It has been from my point of view, and I believe from Canada's, a truly extraordinary event. In particular, I would like to thank National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations, representing the Métis Nation, Audrey Poitras, President Jose Kusugak, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Chief Dwight Dorey, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, President Terri Brown, Native Women's Association of Canada and my colleagues Andy Mitchell, Denis Coderre and Andrew Telegdi.

We are taking today a significant step towards creating a robust and productive partnership between the government of Canada and the Aboriginal people, a first step towards a new plan to achieve tangible results.

We talked today about the changes that are needed to make real improvements in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. All participants confirmed, not surprisingly, that the status quo was not acceptable.

As for the Government of Canada, let me underline once more that we are committed to making whatever changes are required to get the job done. I'm encouraged by the breadth of ideas and by the collective commitment which you could literally feel around each discussion table.

We are committed to getting concrete results, results which will be measurable in areas which are important in the every day life of our Aboriginal fellow-citizens.

Today confirmed our collective commitment to making tangible progress, to making changes that could be measured concretely in terms of education, health care, housing,



living conditions on reserve, employment, economic development, the special plight of urban Aboriginals and the unique needs of Aboriginal women and youth.

To that end, we've agreed on four important steps to sustain momentum and achieve new results. First, we will prepare a what we heard report. It will serve as the blueprint for our plan of action. This will ensure that the good ideas, the advances that were made today in discussions are not left hanging.

Second, we want to get from what we heard to what we're going to do in the key quality of life areas. And to this end, we will convene as soon as possible a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs with Aboriginal leaders to bring further detail to our plan of action.

Third, further to the work of the Cabinet Committee, I'm asking individual ministers to conduct a series of policy roundtables in partnership with Aboriginal peoples on key elements of the plan. These meetings could include Aboriginal experts and organizations, provinces and/or territorial governments and private sector representatives.

Fourth, I want to announce today that we will produce a report card to hold us to account and it will be included in the government's annual report to Canadians.

I would like to announce that we are preparing a status report to take stock of our progress. It will be included in the government's annual report to Canadians and will enable us to measure the progress made.

The report card will be an important tool to use in keeping us focussed. It will tell us and all Canadians how we're doing, what progress we're making and where we simply have to do better if we're to deliver our objective of closing the gap in living conditions for Aboriginal Canadians.

Why are we undertaking these four steps? Because we need to see initiatives. We need to see results and we need to see them as quickly as possible.

To summarize, I'm very excited by what we have begun to create together today. A strong feeling of partnership has emerged from our discussions. There is a real sense of hope underpinned by a renewed commitment to the task at hand.

At the end of this Roundtable, I am confident that, through cooperation, the government of Canada and Aboriginal leaders will make great achievements.



That being said, let's not underestimate how much work we have to do but let's not shrink back from it. Our efforts may encounter doubt because people are used to too little. Well, let's turn this doubt to our purpose. Let it become our motivation.

It's time to show people who think the challenges that we face are insurmountable that they're wrong. Let's commit to move forward at a pace that will surprise.

And now let me turn things over to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine.

National Chief Phil Fontaine

Thank you, Prime Minister. This has certainly been much more than a photo op. This has been a good day and we're extremely pleased with the opportunity that was afforded us today to engage in real and serious discussions with the government. Thank you, Prime Minister.

I said at the start that I was seeking the beginnings of a plan, a comprehensive, coordinated plan that maximizes our return on strategic investments. The Assembly of First Nations and the other organizations here today came with the elements of a plan and put solid ideas on the table as to how we can move forward. We were very pleased by the presence and participation of so many cabinet members.

The Prime Minister spoke of the need for a clear goal, a political commitment and for a concrete plan. We join him wholeheartedly in this effort. Today's meeting showed the value of the Prime Minister's statement about, and I quote, "Ensuring a full seat at the table." We take this to mean full involvement at all processes including first ministers' conferences and other processes. It is important we be fully represented at these very important discussions. Aboriginal peoples include First Nations, Métis and the Inuit. We have some common values and some common processes but we are not seeking a common pan-Aboriginal agenda. Our diversity must be respected and reflected.

We spoke from many perspectives including urban residents and the unique situation of women. The Assembly of First Nations fully supports the National Women's Association of Canada in its Sisters in Spirit campaign to draw attention and action to the plight of women who are victims of violence. The voice of women must be heard in all that we do. We urge the government to hear that voice and specifically to support the Sisters in Spirit campaign.

The Prime Minister spoke of improving the quality of life for all people. We spoke about health, education and housing. These are fundamental issues. We will realize success only through the framework that I hope we have embarked on today. This means



recognizing our jurisdictions, building our capacities to effectively control those jurisdictions and making strategic investments. The Prime Minister challenged us to be accountable and transparent. We fully accept this responsibility and will deliver on it through our own capacity and institutional development. This, after all, is what self-determination is about.

Minister McLellan asked us do we want to get rid of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs? For the Assembly of First Nations the answer is yes. There can be no single time line established to do this but if we can create the momentum to build our own institutions, to renew our government-to-government relationship, then we will establish the pace by which we can achieve this change. As previous National Chief George Erasmus pointed out during our discussion, RCAP identified the tools for renewing that relationship through specific legislative instruments that include recognition, power sharing and capacity building. And clearly, as First Nations peoples we are pressing to re-establish our land base and far and just access to resources in our traditional territories to generate the wealth to sustain our communities.

Minister Scott recognized that central to our discussion today was the issue of power sharing and that this would involve risks. But if we are going to move forward, we must be bold. The old ways are not working.

In this context, Minister Mitchell spoke of the *Indian Act* and said that he wants to re-engage us in the consultative process. Let me be very clear on this: we cannot re-engage because we were never engaged in the first place. We do not want to amend the Indian Act. We want to eliminate the Indian Act. We want it repealed. We are proposing a national dialogue among First Nations on the requirements to facilitate and foster First Nation governments. We can eliminate the Indian Act and move beyond in a new era by building our capacity, our institutions and securing recognition of our government's jurisdiction through a renewed government-to-government relationship.

I do not presume to speak for my colleagues but I hope I have conveyed some of their vision and some of their ideas. I'm optimistic that today was indeed a beginning. The results will be measured by real actions and outcomes.

Today was a start - an important first step. Now let's get down to the real work and move forward together.

Megwetch.

All my relations.