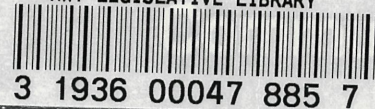


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Meeting of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Leaders of National Aboriginal Organizations

QUÉBEC, May 20, 1998 -- Today, Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and the Leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations met in Québec City to discuss Socio-economic Issues and Prospects, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal Youth and Economic Development. This was the first time in four years that federal-provincial-territorial Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations have met.

On November 18, 1997, Premiers, Territorial Leaders and Leaders of the National Aboriginal Organizations called on the federal government to convene a meeting with Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders to address social issues related to Aboriginal Peoples, a comprehensive process of social policy renewal, the needs of Aboriginal youth and issues related to the implications for Aboriginal peoples of the administrative rebalancing of the Canadian federation.

At the meeting in Québec City, the National Aboriginal Leaders presented to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers a consensus statement of their five organizations outlining a framework of principles which underlines the urgency of undertaking a discussion of relationships between federal, provincial and territorial governments and Aboriginal governments and peoples (attached). Ministers agreed to receive and consider the consensus statement in future discussions.

Demographics demand that all Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders work together to address the urgent challenges facing Aboriginal youth and begin the development of a National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.

Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agreed that the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples provides a solid foundation to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples.

National Aboriginal Leaders and Ministers agreed that Gathering Strength, Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, provides a first step by the Federal government to respond to the RCAP recommendations. Provinces and territories provided an initial response to RCAP's Final Report agreeing that further cooperative approaches are required. This is an opportunity to set a new course for federal-provincial-territorial and Aboriginal relations and to work together for concrete results.

Participants confirmed the importance of accelerated measures to facilitate social and economic development for Aboriginal communities and efforts to enhance Aboriginal self-reliance.

All parties agree that effective solutions require a comprehensive, co-ordinated, and co-operative strategy. Without prejudice to the position of any party who holds a contrary view, Provincial-Territorial Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders restated to the Federal government the issue of its treaty, constitutional and fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal peoples. For its part, but without prejudice to the position of any party who holds a contrary view, the Federal government restated its longstanding position that it has primary but not exclusive responsibility for First Nations on reserve and Aboriginal peoples north of 60°, and that provinces have primary, but not exclusive, responsibility for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.

Without compromising these positions, the comprehensive approach proposes a process of cooperation between the federal government, provinces and territories and Aboriginal Peoples in developing a cross-sectoral action plan to identify strategic ways of improving the social, economic and environmental conditions for Aboriginal peoples.

A comprehensive approach is based on the premise that the federal-provincial-territorial governments, without prejudice to their respective policy positions as set out above, need to work together with Aboriginal Leaders to address the circumstances of Aboriginal peoples. This approach must also ensure that the needs of and resources for Aboriginal peoples are considered in appropriate future federal-provincial-territorial agreements or arrangements.

By taking this approach, we are setting a new course for federal provincial Aboriginal relations and will work together for practical results.

Aboriginal Leaders also reviewed the Communiqué from their meeting with Provincial Premiers of November, 18, 1997 and renewed their call that the Federal Government convene a First Ministers' Conference to enable all levels of Government to respond to the RCAP recommendations.

Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders agreed to direct officials to meet and discuss the nature, structure and priorities of an on-going process and to report back to Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders with recommendations within three months. They also agreed to meet within one year to review progress.

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For additional information, contact:

Rob Cunningham
Saskatchewan Government
(306) 787-8008

Maryse Pesant
Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development
(819) 997-9885

Statement of the Aboriginal Summit
Quebec City
May 19, 1998

Leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations following an Aboriginal Summit held May 19, 1998 in Quebec City released the following statement. The unanimous Statement represents the collective view of the leaders heading into discussions with Federal and Provincial Aboriginal Affairs Ministers. — — — —

Leaders agreed that the re-balancing of the roles and responsibilities of the federation must respect the Aboriginal and Treaty rights protected in the Constitution. Leaders agreed that in any re-balancing Aboriginal peoples must be involved as full and equal participants.

Leaders agreed, as recommended in RCAP, that the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal peoples and communities requires a fundamental commitment to the redistribution of lands and resources to provide an economic base for the effective exercise of Aboriginal governance on a Nations to Nations basis.

Aboriginal leaders agreed that there must be inclusive Aboriginal participation at all levels in changes to the social policy renewal process including seats on the Ministerial Council for Social Policy Renewal, participation in sectoral initiatives and in the process of developing a National Framework Agreement.

With respect to the development of a National Framework Agreement mandated by First Minister's on December 12, 1997, Leaders agreed that such a framework will only be effective if there is full and equal participation of Aboriginal peoples in the process and the resulting Agreement.

Leaders agreed that Canada's social union must be premised on the full recognition of Aboriginal peoples and their governments, including full recognition and respect for treaty and Aboriginal rights and the exercise of jurisdiction over their peoples and territories

The Leaders agreed that it is imperative that Aboriginal peoples be involved in discussions and decision-making relating to children and youth because of the large proportion of children and youth in the Aboriginal population.

In particular, Leaders agreed that Aboriginal people must participate as equals in the development of the National Children's Agenda, provincial reinvestment strategies resulting from the National Child benefit and in the development of a National Youth Strategy.

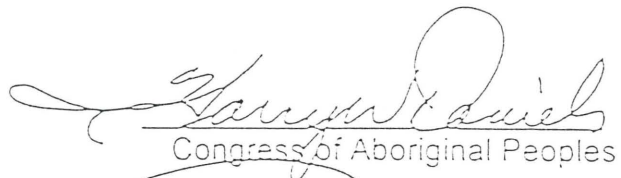
Leaders agreed that the federal government must acknowledge and accept its full treaty, historical, constitutional and fiduciary responsibilities for all Aboriginal peoples.

Leaders agreed that a comprehensive partnership approach is essential to address the social, economic and environmental conditions of Aboriginal men and women. Such an approach must promote equality of Aboriginal men and women. It must also ensure that the needs of and resources for Aboriginal peoples are factored into every federal/provincial/territorial agreement or arrangement and flow from a framework of principles based on Aboriginal and treaty rights and federal fiduciary responsibility.

Aboriginal Leaders also reviewed the Communiqué from their meeting with Provincial Premiers of November, 18, 1997 and demanded that the Federal Government respond to the call for a First Ministers Conference to enable all levels of Government to respond to the RCAP recommendations.



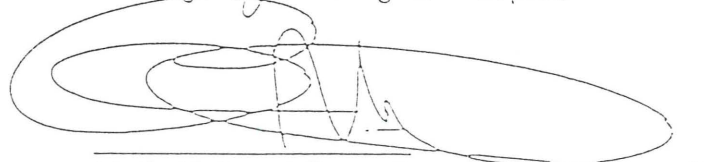
Assembly of First Nations



Congress of Aboriginal Peoples



Inuit Tapirisat of Canada



Metis National Council



Native Women's Association of Canada