



Gathering Strength

Canada's Aboriginal
Action Plan



A Progress Report



Published under the authority of the
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
Ottawa, 2000
<http://www.inac.gc.ca>

QS-6147-000-BB-A1
Catalogue No. R32-192/2000
ISBN 0-662-65048-4

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Table of Contents

Ministers' Joint Message	1
Gathering Strength: Understanding the Past to Build a Better Future	2
Renewing the Partnerships	4
Strengthening Aboriginal Governance	8
Developing a New Fiscal Relationship	12
Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies	14
The Northern Agenda	24





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Ministers' Joint Message

As Canada embarks on a new millennium, it is an important time for reflecting on the past and planning for the future. For Aboriginal people, it is a time to see generations of dreams and aspirations become the promising reality for a burgeoning generation of youth.

In 1998, the Government of Canada initiated *Gathering Strength — Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* to bridge between the challenges of the past, the realities of the present and the opportunities of the future. Aboriginal people, government and other partners agreed to work together on key priorities that would result in jobs, growth, stability and an improved quality of life for Aboriginal people.

Gathering Strength recognized this vision of strong, healthy Aboriginal communities, people and economies depends on a strong foundation of partnership, and the building blocks of good governance and a new fiscal relationship.

After just two years, Gathering Strength is reporting solid, positive, tangible results in all four areas. We believe this is only the beginning.

Our collective efforts have set in place a solid foundation. By working to address grievances of the past we've begun to create a climate of trust and cooperation that allows us to build a positive future.

These stronger partnerships are allowing us to work more effectively on a broad range of issues that foster good governance, strong accountability, economic certainty and fiscal stability. Collectively, our efforts will lead us to concrete results under the fourth theme of Gathering Strength: building stronger Aboriginal communities, people and economies.

Our comprehensive approach involves Aboriginal people, other governments, institutions and the private sector. It is a long-term plan to make fundamental, lasting change. We know effective change takes time and commitment.

As we review the accomplishments of the past year, it is helpful to widen the lens to see the

broader impact of progressive change. In the past 30 years, we've begun to address historic issues and enhance the control of Aboriginal people over their own lives. We've seen positive results: the gap in living conditions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people has narrowed, education levels have improved, unemployment has fallen, housing conditions and infrastructure have improved.

There is still a long way to go before Aboriginal people enjoy the same standard of living as other Canadians but there is momentum to build on. Gathering Strength has allowed us to refine our focus in an integrated framework to put in place the many building blocks of community and economic development. Whether living in a remote northern community, a rural reserve, a Métis community or major urban cities, Gathering Strength is designed with the flexibility to meet the unique needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit across Canada.

Priorities for the years ahead reflect this integrated, comprehensive approach — dealing with the past; looking to the future; facilitating capacity development; strengthening governance; creating an Aboriginal economy; modernizing the *Indian Act*; designing a modern treaty relationship; supporting the development of Canada's North; working more effectively with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Non-Status and urban Aboriginal people; and informing and educating all other Canadians.

Aboriginal people helped build Canada: Gathering Strength will help ensure that Aboriginal people can begin to take their place in our country and begin to reap the benefits of what we have made together.

We can look to the future with confidence and optimism. We know that much work and many challenges lie ahead but we are confident that those challenges will also bring opportunities to continue to build trust, respect and a more promising future for all Canadians.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert Nault'.

Robert Nault,
Minister of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development



Ralph Goodale,
Federal Interlocutor for Métis
and Non-Status Indians



Gathering Strength: Understanding the Past to Build a Better Future

Over time, the Government of Canada has come to understand and to begin to address the legacy of our past relationship with Aboriginal people. We have come to understand that our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride.

We have acknowledged that the result of past actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations. For example, it was not until 1951 that Aboriginal people were able to hire lawyers and almost ten years later that they got the right to vote.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

The impact of these and other actions is social conditions in Aboriginal communities that — while improved — still fall below those of their non-Aboriginal neighbours. Some Aboriginal communities face housing shortages and a lack of amenities like hot and cold running water and flush toilets. The unemployment rate among Aboriginal people is nearly three times the Canadian rate. Furthermore, many Aboriginal communities continue to lack the appropriate resources and expertise needed to deal effectively with such serious problems as high rates of infant mortality, youth suicide, and dependence on social assistance that are higher than the national average.

The need to address the discrepancies in living standards between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is compounded by the fact that the Aboriginal population is growing about twice as fast as the overall Canadian population. This increases the demand for school space, housing, public infrastructure, social services and jobs.

A process of change, however, is underway and has begun to address key dimensions of the relationship between the Crown and Aboriginal people.

Understanding of our past and attempts to modernize our relationship have been informed by more than 45 Supreme Court decisions.

In the 1970s the government began the process of settling comprehensive land claims in areas where no treaties were signed. The first land claim was settled in 1975 with the James Bay Cree. Claims settlements have helped build political and economic stability in beneficiary Aboriginal communities.

A profoundly important step forward in strengthening and protecting Aboriginal rights was a formal affirmation of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the *Constitution Act 1982*.

Another important step forward came in 1995 when the government recognized the inherent right of Aboriginal people to self-government — a recognition that Aboriginal people have a right to govern themselves in relation to the day-to-day operations of their own communities within the Canadian framework.

Despite all of these tremendous advances, it wasn't until the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that it became apparent a comprehensive, integrated approach was needed to create lasting, meaningful change. In all, there were 440 recommendations addressed to all levels of government.

In 1998 the Government of Canada responded to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples with a long-term, broad-based policy approach designed to increase the quality of life of Aboriginal people and to promote self-sufficiency. It is called *Gathering Strength — Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

The vision captured by Gathering Strength is fairly straightforward:

- A new partnership among Aboriginal people and other Canadians that reflects our mutual interdependence and enables us to work together to build a better future.
- Financially viable Aboriginal governments able to generate their own revenues and able to operate with secure, predictable government transfers.
- Aboriginal governments reflective of, and responsive to, their communities' needs and values.
- A quality of life for Aboriginal people like other Canadians.

Though Gathering Strength is a long-term plan, in just two short years it has produced impressive results.



Renewing the Partnerships



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Mutual Respect, Mutual Recognition and Mutual Responsibility

In *Renewing the Partnerships*, we're focussing on programs and initiatives that help us deal with the problems of the past, allowing us to move beyond historic grievances, so that together we can deal with the challenges of the present — and the opportunities of the future.

- All schools in Canada have received public education information materials.
- Federal, provincial and territorial ministers of Aboriginal affairs and leaders of the five national Aboriginal organizations met for the first time in two years.
- National and regional partnership think tanks were conducted.

Healing the Past, Building the Future

In January 1998, the government set aside \$350 million to support *healing initiatives* that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools.

In addition, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and the Department of Justice are currently exploring with residential schools survivors and the codefendant churches possible *models for resolving disputes* over abuse at residential schools, which can provide the most appropriate responses to the claims being brought forward. A number of pilot projects are underway as part of this very important work to approach the legacy of residential schools in a humane way.

Understanding the Foundations of Partnership

Building greater public awareness and understanding of Aboriginal issues is an essential part of renewing our partnerships.

- Last year, some 5,500 students and 300 teachers from Saskatchewan participated in the *Elder Visitation Program*, which brings Elders into classrooms to talk about First Nations culture, tradition and spirituality, and encourages discussion on basic cross-cultural issues and the many positive contributions Aboriginal people make to society.
- In Quebec, the travelling exposition *Braver les préjugés* visited Montreal's Complexe Desjardins, Quebec's Old Port, the Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines Detention Centre and Dorval International Airport, among others, debunking misconceptions about Aboriginal people.

- A series of *Interactive Cultural Sensitivity Training* workshops were conducted for middle and high school teachers throughout the Atlantic region, along with two-day visits to the Mother Earth Lodge at Red Bank, New Brunswick for cultural awareness training.
- Approximately 6,000 Toronto grade six students experienced First Nations culture during the *Canadian Aboriginal Festival* at the SkyDome in Toronto.
- Aboriginal educators developed *The Learning Circle* for DIAND, a set of three guides to help teachers introduce First Nations issues to children under the age of 14, meeting a pressing need for basic information on First Nations in a classroom-friendly format.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Better Partnerships Lead to Better Programs and Policies

The development of stronger relationships with Aboriginal organizations is critical to improving the design, development and delivery of programs and policies. This includes political accords, protocols and other programs that create a framework to help Aboriginal organizations participate in program reform, advocacy and political representation.

- In British Columbia, a forum, *Strengthening Our Political Voice*, brought DIAND together with First Nations committees, associations and organizations with the aim of providing a united voice on policy issues affecting First Nations in the province — helping to achieve an integrated Aboriginal service delivery network.
- In Alberta, *bi-monthly meetings* are held between DIAND and representatives from Treaty 6, 7 and 8 to promote the development of stronger relationships and partnerships. This is an open, transparent “one window” process where information is shared and decisions are made.
- Working closely with political treaty organizations to establish strategic plans for diverse communities in Ontario is the goal of efforts to develop formal protocol agreements. Already, protocols have been signed with the Chiefs of Ontario and with the Six Nations Elected Council.



- Canada and Manitoba are working together to *address issues facing Aboriginal people living in Winnipeg*. Funding of \$36 million was identified for new and existing programs for health, justice, employment development and economic development. Ten government departments are involved in the partnership.
- In 1999, the DIAND-Assembly of First Nations (AFN) *Formal Partnership Development Unit* was established to assist in preparing for the delivery of Lands and Trust Services to be transferred to First Nations.



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

- National Aboriginal Organizations such as the Métis National Council (MNC), the MNC Women's Secretariat, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Métis Settlements General Council have made advances in *delivering concrete advice to the federal government* over the implementation of Gathering Strength. Consultations were funded by the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

- First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal service providers have initiated a number of community processes across Canada under the *Urban Aboriginal Strategy*. An Open Space Forum was held on Urban Aboriginal Issues where comprehensive and multilateral planning commenced to develop an urban Aboriginal strategy for Vancouver. Community Partnership Committees were established in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert involving Aboriginal organizations and all levels of government. A process of dialogue and discussion has been set in motion to establish community processes in a number of other Canadian cities. In Edmonton and Calgary, Aboriginal groups have begun developing a single window concept.
- Discussions are now underway with First Nations organizations to establish the terms of reference for a *National Round Table*, coordinated by the Assembly of First Nations, that will investigate allegations of unfair treatment of Aboriginal veterans and their dependents.
- Under the *Aboriginal Representative Organizations Program* of the Department of Canadian Heritage, an additional \$8 million was provided for 1998–2002 to support capacity-building for national, regional and local Inuit, Métis and Non-Status Indian representative organizations. Through this funding organizations have been able to: reactivate and/or create local chapters to enhance community input into policy and program development processes; provide training workshops; increase computer literacy; and foster local partnerships.

- Federal, provincial and territorial *ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs and national Aboriginal leaders* held a meeting in December to establish processes that focus on achieving practical results through cooperation initiatives. The leaders agreed to yearly meetings and to focus work on Aboriginal participation in the economy.
- National Aboriginal leaders met with the federal-provincial/territorial *Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal* and federal-provincial/territorial ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs to discuss the role of the national Aboriginal organizations in the implementation of the *Social Union Framework Agreement*. Ministers and leaders agreed to various steps, including another meeting within a year to review the outcomes of joint work dealing with Aboriginal involvement in processes related to the *Social Union Framework Agreement*.
- In cooperation with DIAND and the Canada-Nunavut Geoscience Office, the Nunavut Planning Commission held a two-day *capacity building workshop* to bring together all organizations in Nunavut responsible for land, water and resource management to discuss and develop capacity building proposals.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Language, Heritage, and Culture

The Department of Canadian Heritage *Aboriginal Languages Initiative* is designed to support the revitalization and maintenance of Aboriginal languages. Since 1998, the initiative has provided funding for a broad range of activities at the community level, including: the recording of Elders' teachings, child/youth language camps, pre-school/Elder language sessions, language classes for parents, the translation of information materials, research on Aboriginal language speakers and the assessment and/or development of language materials and curriculum.



Strengthening Aboriginal Governance



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

A Cornerstone for Progress

Stable governments reflective of, and responsive to, their communities' needs and values are key to ensuring community development and self-sufficiency. Programs designed to *Strengthen Aboriginal Governance* are dedicated to enabling Aboriginal communities to make the transition to stable and accountable self-government. Initiatives range from settling comprehensive claims as quickly as possible to encouraging professional development, and are aimed at ensuring Aboriginal communities have the resources, capabilities and regulatory support needed to achieve self-government.

- *Legislation for the Nisga'a Final Agreement went through the Parliamentary process.*
- *16 specific claims were settled in 1999-2000*
- *Some 70 comprehensive land claims were negotiated across the country.*
- *More than 100 professional development projects were completed for Aboriginal administrators.*

Making the Transition to Stronger Governments and Stronger Communities

A number of initiatives focus on assisting Aboriginal communities to develop new self-government models — models that support good governance in negotiations, capacity development, written constitutions, community consultations, communication strategies and building understanding with non-Aboriginal neighbours.

- First Nations groups in Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon are developing *consultation strategies* on governance models that will provide a basis for self-government development.
- The Akwesasne First Nation in Ontario and the Miawpukek First Nation in Newfoundland are testing a new, *holistic approach to self-government*, one that emphasizes community needs and a focus on cooperative work prior to negotiations.
- As part of the transition to self-governance, the Council for Yukon First Nations is working on a project to revitalize the *role of Elders* in First Nations governments.
- DIAND has been working with First Nations on developing the concept of a "*governance continuum*" as a tool for providing an integrated approach to capacity development under a continuum of relationships, from the *Indian Act* to self-government.
- Consultation with the Assembly of First Nations has led to planning the development of a *Governance Centre*, which could serve as a centre of excellence to provide governance capacity building for First Nations including core governance, research and knowledge sharing.

Self-Government: A Path to Increased Prosperity

More than 80 *self-government negotiations*, representing more than half of all the First Nations and Inuit communities across Canada, are currently underway. Those agreements in final or advanced stages of negotiations include:

- Dogrib Land Claim and Self-Government
- Labrador Inuit Association Land Claim and Self-Government
- Westbank First Nation Self-Government
- Meadow Lake First Nation Self-Government
- Sioux Valley Self-Government
- United Anishinaabeg Council Self-Government
- *Tripartite self-government negotiations* have been pursued with province-wide Métis or off-reserve Aboriginal organizations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, provincial government representatives, and the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. Negotiations also included the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Métis Settlements General Council in Alberta. They aim to conclude practical arrangements in specific sectoral matters.
- The *Saskatchewan Framework Agreement* was signed by the federal government, the provincial government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The agreement outlines the principles and objectives for formal negotiations aimed at developing and implementing a self-government arrangement for First Nations in Saskatchewan.

- The Department of Canadian Heritage's *Aboriginal Women's Program* provided funding to support and enhance the participation of Aboriginal women in the design and advancement of self-government and their participation in self-government processes.
- A *Special Representative* has been appointed to make recommendations on the rights of First Nations women. The Representative will look at the impact of the administration of the *Indian Act* on First Nations women, potential gaps in the *Indian Act* and other areas.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh





Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Professional Development Leads to Community Development

More than 100 professional development projects were initiated in 1999–2000, focussing on assisting the First Nations and Inuit public service to enhance experience and knowledge in relation to lands, resources, community administration and government structure functions.

- First Nations lands and resources managers from across the country are regrouping as regional associations and as a national association. Such *professional associations* will lead the way to training and certification for First Nations members, and provide expertise and resources in such specialized fields as legal advice, commercial negotiations, environmental assessments and management.
- DIAND and Natural Resources Canada have enhanced the *First Nation Forestry Program* to broaden the area of management capacity building in the forest resource sector. The program has created 900 programs providing more than 40,000 weeks of employment for First Nations members. The National Aboriginal Forestry Association has also been given funding to bring together a national group of 80 members to identify needs and to develop a strategic plan focussed on community-based capacity.

- A *First Nations/Aboriginal Capacity Building workshop on Geomatics* highlighted land and resource management, development and innovative approaches to Geographic Information Systems training. A number of similar projects were also funded to increase functions of land management and land regimes through accurate databases and training.
- Projects like the collaboration by DIAND and First Nations representatives on an orientation package for newly elected First Nations officials, and the *Wagmatcook Joint Community Planning Committee's* work in Nova Scotia on developing a community planning model, will assist Aboriginal communities across the country to achieve self-government.
- The *Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA)* was incorporated in July 1999 to increase professional development opportunities for First Nations people and professional support for First Nations governments. The AFOA held its first annual conference which attracted 300 delegates from across Canada.
- *Professional Development and Capacity* initiatives have allowed for the secondment of a senior manager to the Métis National Council to advise the President on inter-governmental relations and federal programming opportunities. It has also helped create a communications strategy, program database, and national Web site for public education on Métis.
- The Institute on Governance undertook a research project on ethnic minority *governance models* in relation to Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal people.

- With support of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, the B.C. Association of Friendship Centres assessed *innovative funding models and economic development trends* for Aboriginal services delivery. It also undertook professional staff development in the areas of community consultation strategies and negotiation skills.
- Other initiatives include: *development of multi-stakeholders Aboriginal Single Windows* in Edmonton and Calgary, with the Métis Nation of Alberta; supporting the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range Negotiating Committee in *assessing a proposed federal economic development package*; board and affiliates harmonization with the Manitoba Métis Federation; and training in *“mutual gains” negotiation skills* for the Manitoba Métis Federation and several of its affiliates.

Métis and Off-Reserve Governance Initiatives

Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups in partnership with provincial and federal governments have made significant progress in the implementation of governance initiatives in areas crucial to social and cultural development.

- *The British Columbia Métis Commission for Child and Family Services* has been involved in policy development and advising governments including the Métis Provincial Council of B.C. on critical areas of social and cultural development.
- United Native Nations Society, in partnership with the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, has also been involved in *Child and Family Services policy development* and advising government.

- The *Regional Social Program Delivery Institution* for the Métis Settlement General Council, Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, Circle of Thunderbird House in Winnipeg and Métis Family and Community Institute of Manitoba were also supported by the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

Independent Claims Body

Based on the joint AFN-DIAND task force recommendations, a model for an independent claims body is under consideration. The proposed model is designed to address specific claims with greater fairness and transparency within a fiscally responsible framework.

Joint Initiative

The *DIAND-AFN Joint Initiative for Policy Development* is a significant attempt at creating a First Nations-driven process. The objective of the Initiative is to discuss, in consultation with First Nations, the overall management of Lands and Trust Services (LTS) activities and, in partnership with First Nations, to develop a joint plan to transfer greater control of LTS functions to First Nations.



Developing a New Fiscal Relationship



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

Transparent, Accountable, Self-Reliant

We are working with Aboriginal partners to create and support more stable, transparent fiscal models and strong accountability processes that will strengthen the operations of Aboriginal governments — including enabling self-reliant Aboriginal governments to benefit from opportunities such as taxation and other revenue generation. We know that economic development and self-sufficiency go hand in hand: recognizing this potential means that we are truly investing in the future.

- *Ninety-three percent of First Nations communities completed Community Accountability and Management Assessments.*
- *A national model was completed for the Canada/First Nations Funding Agreement.*
- *The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association awarded its first Certified Aboriginal Financial Managers designations.*
- *Canada, Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations completed exploratory fiscal relations and governance discussions in the Common Table process.*
- *A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in December 1999, launching the operations of a National Table on Fiscal Relations.*

Strengthening Fiscal Accountability

Fiscal accountability programs include developing the fiscal mechanisms that promote accountability (such as improved accounting and auditing standards, and strengthened accountability frameworks for governance and program delivery) and building professional capacity in the area of administrative, financial and fiscal management in Aboriginal governments and institutions.

Fiscal Mechanisms

First Nations are conducting standardized *Community Accountability and Management Assessments* in order to identify areas requiring capacity building. As of January 2000, 93 percent of the community assessments across the country were complete, and work is proceeding in accordance with management development plans.

- *Regional Accountability Workshops* — First Nations across most regions organized a new type of workshop to explore ways and means to update their accountability regimes based upon principles common to governments in Canada but equally respectful of their culture and appropriate to their situation.
- The national model for the *Canada/First Nations Funding Agreement* was completed and will be implemented in coming years. This multi-year agreement clarifies the accountability relationship between the parties, and offers a funding mechanism through which other government departments, in addition to DIAND, can transmit funds to First Nations.

- *Benchmarks and Modelling* — A major research study was commissioned to identify the key components of the federal and provincial financial systems, in order to develop a First Nations financial code that will be recognized as comparable to other governments. Four demonstration projects were launched to test the model. Similar projects were launched on access to information and privacy, and on codes of ethics and conflict of interest.
- *Other Working Tools* encompass special projects focussing on opportunities for change, such as learning to exploit technology. One example is an automated First Nations Fiscal Planning Calendar, in which generic planning, budgeting and accountability cycles are set out on a wall chart and accompanied by an interactive CD-ROM reference.

Capacity Building Through Professional Training

- The *Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada* (AFOA) awarded the first Certified Aboriginal Financial Managers (CAFM) designations, a valuable hiring standard for First Nations and a measure of capacity for funding agencies and financial institutions.
- The *Assembly of First Nations/Certified General Accountants Association of Canada Accountability Project* released its second draft of *A Guide to First Nations Accounting and Report Standards*, which will soon be followed by its best practices manual. The two manuals will help First Nations strengthen their annual financial statements and better present financial information to their members.

New Fiscal Arrangements Support Community Development

The development and adoption of new fiscal arrangements will support Aboriginal governments as they move towards increased autonomy and self-reliance. In turn, this will allow First Nations members to more fully benefit from and participate in the Canadian economy.

- Together with the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has successfully completed exploratory *fiscal relations discussions*, with topics that include accountability, transfers, the treaty relationship and revenue options such as taxation and First Nations' own-source revenues.
- Canada and the Assembly of First Nations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a *National Table on Fiscal Relations*, in which they will work together to share information, establish national First Nations' fiscal institutions and develop models of government-to-government transfer systems, so that First Nations can provide better services and infrastructure to their communities.
- The Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians has concluded *multi-year funding agreements* for bilateral processes and tripartite negotiations with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. Similar agreements could be concluded with other recipients.
- Federal departments have pursued efforts to harmonize their reporting requirements in order to lessen the administrative burden faced by Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups.



Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Investing in People

The progress we're making in building partnerships, and in strengthening governance and fiscal relationships, supports the core thrust of *Gathering Strength*: making a difference in the lives of individuals and communities. From improving health and public safety to strengthening economic development, programs to *Support Strong Communities, People and Economies* are helping Aboriginal people and organizations design and deliver programs and services that meet their needs.

- As of March 2000, 132 of 148 Income Security Reform demonstration projects were conducted involving 354 First Nations communities.

- More than 80 First Nations participated in community-based housing initiatives.

- Twenty-seven communities got water and sewer systems.

- More than 300 communities have tripartite policing agreements reached under the First Nations Policing Policy.

Addressing Important Education, Training and Development Needs

Programs across Canada focus on working with Aboriginal partners to improve educational programming, governance and instructional effectiveness, support community and parental involvement, and make the transition between school and work easier.

- Through community consultation and research, the *First Nations Education Steering Committee in British Columbia* dedicated more than \$1.5 million in 1999–2000 to expand services for students with special needs. Support was also provided to school-based program proposals for First Nations schools.
- In 1999–2000, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, First Nations education authorities and DIAND agreed to develop the *Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre*, which will offer a range of valuable consultative and professional services to more than 50 First Nations schools across the province.
- The Union of Ontario Indians, the Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Club and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce created the First Nations *Stay in School Initiative*. The five-year program includes career planning videos and booklets, First Nations Day with the Blue Jays, Vision Quest camps, a Role Model Program and a career information Web site. A new addition is a series of Leadership camps for First Nations youth.

- L'Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais, which represents eight bands in Quebec, is in the second year of a project aimed at developing *Innu language programming* in 10 primary and secondary schools, and is already seeing results in an increased use of the language.
- The *Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy* (AHRDS) is a five-year (1999–2004) \$1.6 billion investment which has seen the gradual transfer of programming authority from the federal government to Aboriginal people at the national, regional and community levels. Under this strategy, Aboriginal organizations design and deliver employment programs and services best suited to meet the unique needs of their communities. Tools and training are part of the AHRDS capacity investments: plain language handbooks, planning toolkits, financial management training, project management training, evaluation and accountability workshops, guides to implementation and monitoring, and self-assessment monitoring, capacity and evaluation instruments.
- AHRDS reports a *client list of 27,000*. During 1998–99, 6,700 clients found employment, saving \$6.2 million in Employment Insurance and social assistance payments. Preliminary data for 1999–2000 indicates that over 8,200 jobs were acquired, resulting in savings of over \$7 million in unpaid Employment Insurance benefits and 35,000 total completed interventions.
- The rate of *disabilities* among Aboriginal people is nearly twice the national average. Under the AHRDS, \$3 million a year has been set aside to ensure that access to training and employment opportunities is increased for Aboriginal people with disabilities.
- *Child care programs* for First Nations and Inuit families is also a priority. The new strategy adds \$5 million a year to the existing \$38 million a year in funding. Over the next five years, Human Resources Development Canada has committed \$205 million to meet the child care needs of First Nations and Inuit parents who are working, or who are in employment training.
- Aboriginal organizations holding Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements determine which Aboriginal youth programs they want to deliver, based on the employment needs of youth in their communities. Under *Canada's Youth Employment Strategy*, a total of \$25 million per year of Human Resources Development Canada's youth funding has been earmarked for helping Aboriginal youth.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh



- In 1998–1999, a joint effort between the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Yukon's Territorial Ministry of Education led to *alternative school programming* — including recreation, cultural workshops and homework tutorials — for children whose severe behaviour problems had resulted in them being expelled from regular programming. The program was so successful that the community expanded it in 1999. A regular after-school program of recreational activities and academic supports now serves about 50 elementary and junior high students in the community.
- The Department of Canadian Heritage's *Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres* (UMAYC) initiative provides urban Aboriginal youth with accessible, community-based and culturally relevant projects, professional and peer counselling to address a wide range of Aboriginal youth issues and needs, and supports the improvement of their economic, social and personal prospects. The initiative is managed and delivered by the National Association of Friendship Centres, the Métis National Council and its provincial-member organizations, and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and regional Inuit associations in the majority of centres across Canada. In Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Edmonton and Calgary the initiative is being managed in partnership with the department's regional offices and Aboriginal youth advisory committees. To date, more than 200 projects have involved almost 10,000 Aboriginal youth.
- The *Aboriginal Women's Program* of the Department of Canadian Heritage provides \$2.2 million in annual funding to support the participation and contribution of Aboriginal women in public policy development and decision-making, and to enhance their leadership and management capacity.
- The Qikiqtani Inuit Association received \$35,000 for the *Supporting Arctic Students Online* project, which assists in training youth in the Baffin region in the areas of computers, the Internet and community leadership.

Income Security Reform: From Welfare to Work

Income security reform demonstration projects offer First Nations the opportunity to develop and form innovative responses to local needs and priorities with respect to social assistance policy, programming and service delivery. The results from these projects will contribute to the development of a redesigned national social assistance policy framework aimed at transforming the on-reserve welfare system from passive support that encourages dependency to a case-managed, integrated system that promotes both individual and community self-reliance.

- The Pic River First Nation in Ontario has undertaken a project to design and implement a *case management system* for social assistance recipients to assess their skills and enhance their employability. An additional focus is to increase linkages between the community's social assistance program and the economic development department.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

- In Alberta, the *O'Chiese First Nation* selected 10 interested social assistance recipients considered "high risk" for entering into the workforce. Nine of the participants are now employed, and one has returned to school. Peripheral achievements include overwhelming community support and the heightened self-esteem of the participants and their families.
- In January 1999, the Musqueam Adult Learning Centre and Qey Sta:m Career Preparation Training Centre in British Columbia opened the *Musqueam Adult Learning and Café Training Centre* as part of their Income Security Reform project. The centre offers Grade 11 and 12 credit courses in Foods and Nutrition, Cafeteria Service and Chef Training. Enrolment immediately increased when the café opened, and the centre is even attracting individuals who previously hadn't pictured themselves entering an academic program.
- In Manitoba, the Island Lake Tribal Council has implemented the *Whitefish for the Community* project. Through this demonstration project, the communities of Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point and Wasagamack are harvesting whitefish to maximize the Northern Social Assistance Food Allowance and to create long-term employment opportunities. In the past, as much as 60 percent of the whitefish was disposed of; the fish is now being used effectively by the community members.
- Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan has implemented *Keeping the Circle Strong*, a program that focuses on the integration of available programming and case-by-case intervention by establishing a comprehensive Human Resource Development Program at the First Nation level. The project's current phase is an adult education training program that links to programs being offered by other government departments and includes life skills, parenting skills, computer skills, job readiness, motivational speakers, student support (tutoring and counselling) and a Grade 10 equivalency course.



Economic Development at the Core of Community Development

Supporting economic development in Aboriginal communities is key to their continued growth. That is why DIAND committed an additional \$75 million to economic development for 2000–2001, and a further \$100 million in 2001–2002. The broad and balanced approach is designed to further develop and strengthen First Nations and Inuit community economic capacity, business development and participation in major regional economic development opportunities.

Resource Partnerships Program (RPP)

RPP (formerly Federal-Provincial-Territorial Partnerships Program) assists First Nations and Inuit communities to participate in, and obtain economic benefits from, large-scale natural resource development projects through strategic planning and negotiation of joint working agreements, in partnership with private sector developers and provincial or territorial governments. Benefits include increased employment, contracting and small business development.

- In partnership with the province of Alberta, the municipality of Wood Buffalo and resource developers, RPP supported the *Athabasca Tribal Council's* participation in the planned \$26-billion expansion of Alberta's Athabasca oil sands; partnership agreements were signed in August 1999.
- In partnership with Manitoba Hydro, RPP supported the Split Lake Cree First Nation in negotiating and planning a multi-year initiative that will see the First Nations participating in a *hydro-electric development*. Potential benefits include employment opportunities in construction and project operation, and related business opportunities in hospitality and tourism.

- The region of Quebec launched the *Réseau Express* concept, bringing together all potential partners at the same table in order to facilitate access to Aboriginal programs and accelerate the process of analyzing a project. Réseau Express is now in place and the results are remarkable.

Economic Development Opportunity Fund (EDOF)

The EDOF provides financial assistance in the form of matching "equity gap" funding to First Nations and Inuit businesses via their respective Community Economic Development Organizations. The objective is to enable the recipient to use the funding to lever conventional debt financing for business start-ups or expansions in order to pursue business opportunities.

- The EDOF supported *105 projects* in various sectors of the economy, including tourism, transportation and knowledge-based initiatives.
- The *Sagamok Anishnabek First Nation* developed a 17,500-square-foot business centre and multi-purpose complex on its reserve located southwest of Sudbury, Ontario. The project provides the only commercial space available in the community, and created a total of 27 construction jobs and 25 full-time positions.
- *Flying Dust Concrete Products and General Services* caters to the concrete, gravel and forestry industries in central Saskatchewan and western Alberta. The company was established when Meadow Lake Concrete Ltd. entered into a partnership with the Flying Dust First Nation and relocated their operation on the reserve. Economic spin-offs include increased employment opportunities for band members: the company employs 15 people, 50 percent of whom are Aboriginal.

Resource Acquisition Initiative (RAI)

The RAI assists communities to acquire natural resource permits and licences by funding resource-sector and related business opportunities.

- In 1999–2000, the RAI supported 35 projects in the resources sector.
- The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations received support for the purchase of inventory to construct a *wood processing manufacturing facility* and machinery and supplies to produce kiln-dried and planed lumber. This project created 26 full-time jobs.
- The Chipewyan Prairie First Nation in Alberta expanded *Janvier Transport* to provide water hauling and vacuum waste disposal services to the First Nations community, the private sector, and oil and gas companies in the region. The expansion has created six additional jobs for local band members.
- The Tl'azt'en Nation in British Columbia acquired one million dollars of additional equipment for *Tl'azt'en Woodlands* with the assistance of the RAI. Funding for the purchase came from the RAI and a commercial loan secured by the First Nation. The investment led to the creation of 21 additional full-time jobs in the Tl'azt'en community.

Aboriginal Contract Guarantee Instrument

During 1999–2000, the department developed a model for an *Aboriginal Contract Guarantee Instrument* that would use Aboriginal financial institutions to provide contract guarantees to Aboriginal businesses which meet the surety industry requirements but are not currently served by the surety industry. Implementation of the instrument is expected in 2000–2001.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Aboriginal Business Development Initiative

The *Access to Capital* element of the Aboriginal Business Development Initiative was launched in November 1999. It will bring into a national network the Aboriginal financial institutions providing developmental lending to Aboriginal businesses; provide that network with the capacity to lever additional capital from the private sector; ensure developmental lending becomes available nationally; and provide services to the institutions to increase their viability.

Improving Economic and Employment Opportunities

A number of equal opportunity initiatives are focussed on attracting and retaining Aboriginal employees, ensuring that they have access to professional development programs and career advancement. Other programs are designed to assist Aboriginal businesses.

Through programs like the *Aboriginal Development Initiative* and the *Aboriginal Summer Student Employment Program*, Aboriginal representation is increasing within the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA).



- The CCRA's Thunder Bay Tax Services Office launched an *Aboriginal Recruitment Initiative* in 1999 that includes an Aboriginal Development Plan to assist in providing employee development opportunities, and retention and apprenticeship programs. With the support of the Northwestern Ontario Federal Council, the *Aboriginal Federal Employees Committee of Thunder Bay* was created to address the issue of retention of Aboriginal employees in federal departments, and a chapter of the *Inter-provincial Association on Native Employment Inc.* is being set up in Thunder Bay.
- In Nova Scotia, CCRA representatives are working together to conduct information sessions in Aboriginal communities to recruit *Aboriginal summer students*.
- The CCRA Pacific Region has made substantial progress in its efforts to improve the success rates of self-identified Aboriginal people writing the *Customs Inspector Recruitment Training Program* test, boosting the pass rate to 72 percent, up 30 percent from the previous year.
- Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) worked closely with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to develop *Internship, Training and Temporary Assistance*

programs to assist Aboriginal businesses and organizations in accessing opportunities within the government procurement system.

- PWGSC also opened *informatics courses* at the Government Telecommunications and Informatics Service to Aboriginal businesses in the national capital area.
- PWGSC has developed a *registry* of Aboriginal educational agencies, post-secondary institution programs, service providers and employment agencies to assist the department in increasing the recruitment of Aboriginal peoples. It also expanded its *Executive Development Program* — originally piloted for persons in a visible minority group — nationally, and to Aboriginal employees.
- PWGSC continues to promote a supplier program aimed at increasing representation of Aboriginal businesses and groups. In Manitoba, for the January to November period, the *Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business* included 17 standing offers valued at over \$2.1 million and 16 contracts valued at close to \$1.2 million.

Access to Lands and Resources, Access to Community Growth

This initiative has accelerated the progress of the existing Resource Access Negotiations (RAN) program by financially assisting Aboriginal communities as they negotiate access to resource-based economic opportunities. In addition, other government departments are aiding Aboriginal communities to leverage economic opportunities based on natural resources.

- *Wapawekka Lumber Ltd.* opened in June 1999, a joint venture between three Woodland Cree Nations in Saskatchewan and Weyerhaeuser Canada to build and operate a sawmill that will employ over 40 people full-time, most of whom are First Nations members. The sawmill will produce lumber from curved logs, which would otherwise be ground into pulp and sold in the United States.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

- The *Natashquan Community* successfully obtained a Forest Management Licence Area in Quebec that included a management plan incorporating the building of a sawmill. A job-sharing arrangement is included in the economic benefits. So far, 20 persons have been trained and more than 50 members of the Natashquan Community will find a job at the sawmill.
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada has been involved in co-management agreements with First Nations since 1992 through its *Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy*. Under this strategy, projects include studying and assessing fish stocks as a basis for improving fisheries management. Among the projects are a salmon stock assessment on the English River in Northern Labrador, a herring biological study in the Bras d'Or Lakes of Cape Breton, and a count of salmon returning to the Stellako River in British Columbia.
- Environment Canada's *EcoAction 2000* program is assisting the Rainy River First Nation in Ontario to protect the Rainy River watershed, including rehabilitating fish spawning habitat and reclaiming the shoreline. This project complements the Rainy River First Nation's successful Lake Sturgeon hatchery.
- *GeoConnections' Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI)* of Natural Resources Canada provides funding to improve Canadian communities' ability to plan, make decisions and create partnerships by increasing their

capability to obtain, generate, use and discuss geographical information through the Internet where economically feasible. Twelve Aboriginal communities have successfully completed pilot projects and received funding from the program.

Improving Infrastructure Improves Opportunities for Economic Development

New infrastructure initiatives are designed to improve the adequacy of housing, water and sewer services in First Nations communities. They contribute to improvements in the basic living conditions and overall health of community members, including addressing the high incidence of tuberculosis in reserve communities, which is linked to overcrowding and environmental concerns.

- During 1999–2000, more than 80 First Nations developed *community-based housing proposals* and received additional funding to support housing improvements. This brings the total of First Nations now operating under the new federal on-reserve housing policy to 337.
- The *Innovative Housing Fund* has, to date, supported 35 projects, the majority of which look at new techniques and technology in housing construction and in water and sewer treatment and distribution.
- In 1999–2000, 27 new *water and sewer projects* were supported, constructing new infrastructure in communities where none existed, and addressing other urgent health and safety related water and sewage projects.



- The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte have, in consultation with other First Nations from across the country and government housing officials, developed a *community housing plan* training package to assist other First Nations in developing and implementing their community-based housing policies and programs. The material has been tested and is now in final revisions.
- The Shuswap Band in British Columbia is involved in multi-phase land development. DIAND's *Economic Development Opportunity Fund* provided \$451,500 in assistance to a project that is primarily financed through commercial debt. The golf course component opened May 2000. Infrastructure is now being installed to service a highway commercial centre and a housing/condominium area.
- The Assembly of First Nations participated in preparing a *Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency course* that will generate awareness within First Nations communities of various techniques and technologies that are available, as well as their costs, benefits and implementation approaches.



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Reversing Homelessness

Homelessness is a concern throughout Canadian society, particularly among Aboriginal people.

- As part of the Government of Canada's announcement in December 1999 to help alleviate and prevent homelessness across Canada, \$59 million has been allocated to enhance existing federal programs through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to address *Aboriginal homelessness* in Canada's urban centres.

Improving Health

Aboriginal people face a host of health challenges. However, under Gathering Strength, some key programs have been introduced.

- The *Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI)* is one of four components of the Canadian Diabetes Strategy (CDS) announced by Health Canada in 1999. The ADI has three main elements: care and treatment services for First Nations people on reserves and in Inuit communities; diabetes prevention and health promotion programs for all Aboriginal people, including Métis and urban Aboriginal peoples; and lifestyle supports in communities, for those living with diabetes, and for their families.
- Health Canada, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), the Métis National Council (MNC) and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) collaborated in establishing the *Aboriginal Health Institute*. Officially incorporated as the Organization for the Advancement of Aboriginal Peoples' Health, this new organization will focus on priority areas of health information and research, traditional health and healing, health policy, capacity building and public education. In addition, three centres have been created to address health issues specific to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including issues of concern to Aboriginal women, children and youth, the elderly and urban Aboriginal people.

- In 1998, Health Canada expanded its off-reserve *Aboriginal Head Start Program* to include First Nation families and children living on-reserve. National and regional committees with links to Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and DIAND have been established to oversee the implementation of this and other children's programs. In 1998–99, a total of 240 needs assessment projects and 61 operational projects were funded. In 1999–2000, a total of 202 projects were funded, which included 47 needs assessments/developmental projects and 156 operational projects.



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

Towards Safer Communities

Safety, fairness and effectiveness form the cornerstone of programs aimed at enhancing the safety of Aboriginal people, both within their communities and across Canada.

- The Correctional Service of Canada has signed agreements with five Aboriginal community organizations to operate *Healing Lodges* for federal offenders; discussions are underway with several other communities for an additional five lodges. The rate of incarceration is 8.5 times higher for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people.
- The *Youth Justice Renewal Initiative*, launched in May 1998, has identified Aboriginal issues as a priority. This initiative supports the capacity of Aboriginal communities to participate in and deliver community-based youth justice options contained in the proposed *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.
- The *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention* has also identified Aboriginal issues as a priority. Aboriginal communities receive support for crime prevention activities and pilot projects through social development, increased knowledge of what works, and tools and resources that help to prevent crime and victimization.
- Solicitor General Canada's *First Nations Policing Policy* continues to provide First Nations with access to police services that are professional, effective, culturally appropriate and accountable to the communities they serve. To date, more than 760 fully-trained police officers serve some 224,000 people in more than 300 Aboriginal communities across the country.
- The Department of Justice has conducted a review of the *Native Courtworker Program* in cooperation with its provincial, territorial and Aboriginal program delivery partners in order to enhance the program's ability to meet the changing needs of Aboriginal people.
- The *Aboriginal Justice Strategy* continues to assist Aboriginal community justice initiatives, supporting 65 programs that offer services to more than 250 communities throughout Canada. Initiatives include urban diversion alternative measures in four urban centres in Saskatchewan, a Vancouver Restorative Justice Program and the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto.
- The *Aboriginal Justice Learning Network* is carrying on its work to link front-line community justice workers with other justice professionals in both rural and urban communities, including supporting networking conferences and training workshops in all regions.



The Northern Agenda



Photo credit: Tessa MacIntosh

Gathering Strength in Canada's North

Canada's North is a diverse, vibrant and forward-looking region that is vital to our national identity and to our economy. The Northern Agenda centres on working in partnership with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal northerners, as well as the three territorial governments and the private sector, to advance social, political and sustainable development for all northerners.

- *Canada's third territory, Nunavut, was created on April 1, 1999.*
- *A comprehensive land claim and self-government Agreement-in-Principle was reached with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council.*
- *Seven Yukon First Nations signed agreements for the transfer of programs and services.*
- *Impact and Benefit Agreements between four First Nations and BHP Diamonds Inc. created 400 jobs.*

On April 1, 1999, the new territory of *Nunavut* was established with a Legislative Assembly of 19 elected members and a highly decentralized government structure. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. continues to play an important role representing Inuit interests to the new public government of Nunavut and in overseeing the implementation of the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement*.

Very much within the spirit of *Gathering Strength*, a four-year partnership between the Government of Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. culminated in the completion by March 31, 2000 of the Nunavut legislative assembly, 10 new Government of Nunavut office buildings and 250 units of Government of Nunavut employee housing in 11 communities. These facilities were built on time and within budget by the 100 percent Inuit-owned *Nunavut Construction Corporation* of Iqaluit and are now under lease to the Government of Nunavut. In cooperation with the governments of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, DIAND also supported a major program to upgrade municipal infrastructure in 11 communities to accommodate population growth due to Government of Nunavut operations and decentralization.

Over the past year, the Northwest Territories has also adjusted to the new challenges following division. The governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal partners have worked together toward the establishment of a *federal/territorial/Aboriginal intergovernmental process* as the mechanism to enhance partnerships toward building a common agenda for the territory.

- The Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council signed a *comprehensive land claim and self-government Agreement-in-Principle* on January 7, 2000.

- The Government of Canada, the Yukon government and First Nations are continuing to make progress on negotiating the devolution of provincial-like powers, jurisdictions and responsibilities of DIAND to the Yukon government, thereby supporting the *political evolution* of the Yukon Territory and greater decision making by northerners.
- On November 19, 1999, the Government of Canada and the seven self-governing Yukon First Nations each signed a *Programs and Services Transfer Agreement* relating to land and resource management programs formerly delivered by DIAND. These agreements increase the annual funding base provided to these Yukon First Nations, thereby enabling them to carry out land, mineral and forestry management activities on settlement lands and to participate more effectively in all aspects of resource management activities delivered by the federal and territorial governments throughout the Yukon.
- DIAND continued to foster *healthy environments* through activities such as working in partnership to clean up hazardous waste sites across the North and to deliver the Northern Contaminants Program, which addresses the issue of contaminants in traditional foods.
- DIAND is leading the preparation of a *federal northern sustainable development strategy*. The strategy is being developed with 20 other federal departments and in close consultation with northerners in all three territories. By developing a decision-making approach that integrates environmental, economic and social considerations, the strategy will provide an approach to the management of natural resources and protection of the environment that will create stronger communities with sustainable economies in the North.



Photo credit: Hans Blohm

- As a result of federal encouragement, BHP Diamonds Inc. has entered into *Impact Benefit Agreements* with four Aboriginal groups. This has created almost 400 new jobs for northerners. Other diamond mining companies are now in the process of negotiating similar agreements.
- *Benefits plans*, which are a condition that proponents must meet to obtain northern oil and gas exploration and development authorization, are contributing to employment of northerners, as well as to business opportunities. For example, Fort Liard is experiencing nearly full employment.
- As the lead country for the Arctic Council initiative on *The Future of Children and Youth in the Arctic*, Canada designed indicators to study and assess the current health status of children and youth residing in the Arctic region. The assessment will provide necessary input into public health policy making and in the setting of priorities in health planning. In parallel, DIAND established a successful youth internship program, enabling northern youth to learn about sustainable development practices abroad.



- Aiming to increase the level of access to post-secondary education in the North, DIAND actively contributed to the establishment of a *University of the Arctic*. This “university without walls” uses modern computer-based technology to link Arctic educational institutions and enhance Arctic community access to educational programs.
- Strengthening bilateral cooperation between Canada and Russia on northern issues is one of the priorities of the new *Northern Dimension* to Canada’s foreign policy. Through the DIAND/Goskomsever Memorandum of Understanding, DIAND facilitated linkages between Canadian and Russian northern municipalities to enhance the capacity of northerners to explore new economic opportunities. In addition, DIAND, through its Northern Products Marketing Project, introduced northern expertise on the marketing of wild meat (caribou) to the Russian North.
- The *Economic Development Resource Acquisition Initiative* assists First Nations and Inuit to establish viable resource businesses. One key element is the successful partnerships that have developed between Aboriginal business leaders and federal and provincial government departments through the establishment of Regional Project Review Committees. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories continue to work with their Aboriginal representatives to establish such committees, which are expected to become operational during the 2000–2001 fiscal year.
- A Natural Resources Canada initiative to identify financially viable *renewable-energy projects* in Canada’s remote communities has resulted in several projects moving forward in Aboriginal communities in the North. There include solar air heating and biomass heating projects and small-hydro systems.
- In Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s *Community Fisheries Workers Project*, field workers contracted by seven Aboriginal organizations in six northern communities fostered cooperative fisheries management at the community level. They gathered key harvest data, helped to improve fish handling and processing practices and involved community members in finding solutions to fishery management problems.



Photo credit: Hans Blohm