

## Further Information

New Relationship materials can be found at:  
[www.gov.bc.ca/arr/popt/the\\_new\\_relationship.htm](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/popt/the_new_relationship.htm)

Background on the BC Treaty process can be found at:  
[www.bctreaty.net/index.html](http://www.bctreaty.net/index.html)

Aboriginal and treaty rights court cases can be found at:  
[www.gov.bc.ca/arr/popt/landmark\\_court\\_cases/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/popt/landmark_court_cases/)

## Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

PO Box 9100,  
Stn Prov Gov't,  
Victoria, BC V8W 9B1

Toll-free:  
1-800-880-1022

By e-mail:  
[ABRInfo@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ABRInfo@gov.bc.ca)

# The New Relationship

## Aboriginal People and the Government of British Columbia: *Building a healthy and prosperous future together*



## Vision

The Government of British Columbia is committed to bridging the gaps that have denied Aboriginal people their rightful place in our society. The Province and First Nations leaders are taking bold steps to address failures of the past through a new relationship. It will be guided by principles of trust, and by recognition and respect of First Nations rights and title.

*"Let us not take timid and tentative steps. Let us take bold and decisive actions to bridge the gaps that have left Aboriginal people behind for far too long. Let us seize this promising moment in our history to claim the full promise of Canada for all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike".*

**Premier Gordon Campbell,**  
First Ministers' Meeting, November 2005

The New Relationship commits government to involve First Nations leaders in public policy work that affects the lives of Aboriginal people. It commits First Nations to work with government as partners, documenting results together so the public can access information and hold us jointly accountable for our progress. The New Relationship will look to:

- ▶ improve economic, social and cultural opportunities for Aboriginal people
- ▶ involve First Nations in natural resource management
- ▶ share the benefits from resource-related activities so that First Nations can join in the economic development of British Columbia.

British Columbia is committed to Five Great Goals over the next decade: leading the nation in education, health care, social supports, environmental management and job creation. We will only reach these goals when First Nations and Aboriginal people are full participants in the province's development.

## Overview

Past relationships between Aboriginal people and the provincial government have been marked by confrontation, litigation and failure to reconcile our differences. Aboriginal people, government, industry and communities across British Columbia are now working together to establish positive relations that will define our collective future.

Aboriginal people are at a significant disadvantage in the areas of health, education and standard of living. On average, their life expectancy is shorter than the general population in British Columbia.



They have higher rates of diabetes, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality and suicide. The numbers of Aboriginal students graduating from high school, college and university are well below the national average. Their housing and public works are substandard. Many of these conditions are comparable to those in the Third World.

Since the BC Treaty Commission process began in 1992, government has focused its efforts on making treaties. Few historical treaties were signed in British Columbia, and our provincial economy has suffered as a result of the unresolved land question. The government remains committed to negotiating treaties.

*"The New Relationship your government hopes to build is a true partnership of opportunity. It obliges us to build on Canada's First Nations heritage as a critical advantage in nation-building. It obliges us to forge a New Relationship based on mutual respect, recognition and Aboriginals' constitutional rights. British Columbia is determined to lead Canada and walk the path together to lasting reconciliation".*

**Throne speech 2006**

But negotiating treaties is complex and it takes many years to reach agreements. Government needs to find practical and timely ways to improve social and economic conditions – for First Nations engaged in treaty-making and for those who have chosen not to enter the treaty process.

In November 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada delivered two significant rulings. The judgments, on the Haida and Taku River Tlingit cases, made it clear that government has an obligation to consult with First Nations when decisions related to activities on Crown land could impact their Aboriginal rights and title.

Time and again, the courts have instructed government and First Nations to reconcile these matters through negotiation, not litigation. It has become clear that reconciliation involves building a positive, enduring relationship built on trust and mutual respect.





In March 2005, senior provincial government officials and leaders from the First Nations Summit (FNS), Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) held a series of meetings. They talked about how government was going to approach its obligation to consult and address First Nation interests. Together they drafted a vision for the New Relationship.

*"I see the New Relationship recognizing the need for an ongoing economic interdependence between First Nations people, the provincial and federal governments, as well as business and industry. It's the first time in my memory that the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have decided to take that very important step forward and engage the challenge - at the same time that the First Nations leadership in this province has also stepped forward".*

**Chief Stewart Phillip,**

Union of BC Indian Chiefs (Voice of BC, November 3, 2005)

## Achieving a New Relationship

The New Relationship establishes a partnership between government and First Nations in British Columbia. Government did not begin this effort on its own. Instead, provincial representatives and First Nations leaders identified goals together, including a commitment to achieve and report results to the public. Government is working with the First Nations Leadership Council that includes representatives from the FNS, UBCIC and BCAFN.

### Goals

We are committed to working with First Nations leaders, and the government of Canada, to eliminate, within 10 years, the gaps in health, education and living standards for Aboriginal people on and off reserves.

These measures include:

- ▶ improving a range of health care programs and increasing the number of Aboriginal health care professionals

- ▶ implementing an agreement on First Nation jurisdiction over kindergarten to Grade 12 education
- ▶ addressing infrastructure and water quality issues
- ▶ a new framework for dealing with Aboriginal rights in order to enhance economic opportunities on the land base

### Role of treaty-making

British Columbia remains committed to treaty negotiations as a full and formal expression of reconciliation. Treaties with First Nations will lead to economic stability over the land and natural resources. Treaties will also support First Nations' efforts to gain skills, develop their economies and govern their communities. British Columbia will negotiate increased access for First Nations to lands and resources through interim measures.

*"I believe what we've done here is reach a turning point in the nature of the relationship between the Crown and First Nations".*

**Grand Chief Edward John,**

First Nations Summit (Prince George Citizen, June 18, 2005)

### Role of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

Every ministry in the provincial government will foster new working relationships with First Nation communities and Aboriginal people.



The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will work with ministries and agencies across government to coordinate efforts in two key areas: practical steps to narrow social and economic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal British Columbians, and long-term reconciliation through treaties and other agreements.

The provincial government will continue to work with groups representing off-reserve Aboriginal people and Métis. We will focus on practical ways to meet the needs related to housing, education, health and economic development.

### Progress

It is understood that a 10-year plan to bridge the social and economic standards between First Nation citizens and other British Columbians must evolve over time. Concrete actions are required at the beginning of this plan to build the relationships and momentum to achieve our shared goals.

The Province of British Columbia is actively working with its partners on initiatives such as – First Nations involvement in the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter games, development of an Aboriginal Tourism Strategy, access to forestry resources, projects to deal with the impact of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation, providing broadband connectivity to First Nation communities – to name a few. We will continue to build on these and other successes.

### Transformative Change Accord

The Province and the First Nations Leadership Council have committed to meeting regularly to develop policies and programs that support what was envisioned at the First Ministers' Meeting in November 2005. Work on initiatives in the Transformative Change Accord is now underway and includes discussions with the federal government on its vision to close the social and economic gap that exists between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians.

By working together, Provincial ministries and the First Nations Leadership Council will ensure Aboriginal people share in the social and economic growth of the province.

### \$100 Million New Relationship Fund

On March 31, 2006, the New Relationship Trust Act took effect. An independent corporation governed by seven directors has been established to manage the \$100-million Trust. The goal of the fund is to provide First Nations with tools, training and skills so they can participate more fully in land and resource management, land-use planning processes and also develop social, economic and cultural programs for their communities. Government collaborated with the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations on establishing the legislation and appointments to the board of directors.

*"This funding means the words in the New Relationship document have a financial start. The money is a beginning, and with it communities can develop capacity towards their own well-being and self-government through treaty..."*

**A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo),**

Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief (Indian Country, October 3, 2005)



### Education:

The high school completion rate for Aboriginal students reached a record high of 48% in 2004/2005, an increase of one per cent over last year and six per cent since 2000/01. The First Ministers' Meeting pledged that by 2016 the high school completion rate for Aboriginal students would equal that of other Canadians.

### Language preservation:

More than 60 per cent of indigenous languages in Canada are found in B.C. Of the 32 indigenous languages in B.C., five have become extinct and six more are near extinction. The Province provided a \$1-million contribution towards language preservation, double the annual funding provided to the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council in previous years.

### Economic development:

Balanced Budget 2006 invests \$30 million to support Coastal First Nations conservation and economic development opportunities. Plus \$3 million to extend Bladerunners to more communities, an award-winning on-the-job construction training and apprenticeship program for disadvantaged and multi-barrier youth.

### Health:

"Suicide rates are lower for First Nations bands that have made progress toward self government and land claims, have cultural facilities, and have control over local services such as health care, education, police, and fire. The more 'protective factors' in a community, the lower its suicide rate."

*The Health and Well-being of Aboriginal People in British Columbia, 2001*