

FIRST MINISTERS AND NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LEADERS STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND CLOSING THE GAP

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INTRODUCTION

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to take immediate action to improve the quality of life for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in four important areas – health, education, housing and relationships. They also agree that enhancing economic opportunities is a key priority area for multilateral action. To ensure that tangible progress is made, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders have set goals and agreed on the need for indicators to measure progress.

Aboriginal and treaty rights, including rights under modern land claim agreements, play an important role in improving the quality of life of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

The Aboriginal peoples of Canada includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. This is inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples, who may reside on reserves or settlements, in rural or urban areas, or northern and Arctic regions.

Indians (First Nations), Inuit and Métis have unique histories, cultures, traditions and relationships with federal-provincial-territorial governments. Their social and cultural distinctions are a defining feature of Canada and form an important context for cooperative efforts to improve their well-being. In addition, this document contains commitments that address the interests of Aboriginal peoples living in urban and rural areas.

This meeting fulfills a commitment made at the September 2004 Special Meeting of First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders to convene a meeting dedicated to Aboriginal issues, including the key determinants of health.

A 10-YEAR COMMITMENT TO CLOSING THE GAP

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders are committed to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal peoples and federal, provincial and territorial governments. These relationships will be based on enhanced collaboration, effective working partnerships and mutual respect. In that spirit, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders are launching a 10-year dedicated effort to closing the gap in the quality of life that now exists between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. The ultimate goal of this effort is to address the serious conditions that contribute to poverty among Aboriginal peoples and to ensure that they can more fully benefit from and contribute to Canada's prosperity. In strengthening relationships, all parties are committed to move forward in ways that build on the principles enshrined in the Constitution including the recognition and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

MEASURING PROGRESS

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree that measuring progress is critical in the effort to close the gap. The goal is to achieve progressively better results over the next 10 years. Accordingly, they have agreed that broad indicators in education, housing and health will be used to assess progress. In addition, more specific measures and targets will be developed at regional and sub-regional levels. Appropriate investments will be made to ensure that reliable data are available to support these efforts.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide how the parties will work together:

- Recognizing and respecting the diverse and unique history, traditions, cultures and rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada which include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada – by adopting a distinctions-based approach;

- Addressing the differing circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in all regions and communities regardless of place of residence (on reserves or settlements, in rural or urban areas, or northern and Arctic regions) or legal status under the *Indian Act*;
- Working collaboratively with First Nations, Inuit and Métis women to address their needs through their participation in the development of culturally-relevant policies and programs that affect Aboriginal peoples;
- Working collaboratively with First Nations, Inuit and Métis in an inclusive manner on policy and program development to ensure that their interests are appropriately reflected in programs and services that affect all Aboriginal peoples, as well as, where appropriate, engaging Aboriginal service delivery organizations;
- Respecting existing bilateral, tripartite and multilateral agreements and processes;
- Respecting regional differences; and,
- Being accountable and reporting regularly to their respective constituencies on achieving progress through agreed-upon culturally relevant indicators and targets, at regional and national levels, as appropriate.

EDUCATION

Improving the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal learners, which includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis, is essential to building a more prosperous and self-reliant future for all Aboriginal peoples, and to promoting personal well-being and positive social change. At the same time, there are many factors that may affect educational success such as poor housing conditions and overcrowding, poverty and violence in the home.

All stages of the life long learning continuum are critical to achieving better results, with the support of parents, families, elders and communities. In the future, this will mean linking and enhancing programs and services all along the continuum, in particular, early learning and child care and post-secondary education.

Although progress is being made, significantly more needs to be done to improve all Aboriginal learners' educational experiences and to increase the number of secondary school graduates.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to the goal of closing the gap in K-12 educational attainment between Aboriginal learners and other Canadians by 2016, while respecting and supporting their unique cultures, traditions, and languages.

Achieving this goal will require a sustained effort by all parties. It will involve enhancing the educational environment for learners through agreed to initiatives. It will mean developing more effective working relationships between the public education systems and First Nations schools on reserve or pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements, and flexible arrangements that respect different regional and local circumstances. The needs of Aboriginal women will be addressed.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to measuring progress towards closing the gap by increasing the number of Aboriginal secondary school graduates.

Public Education Systems

Working collaboratively with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and relevant Aboriginal organizations and communities, provinces and territories are committed to improving the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal learners attending public schools through various educational initiatives such as:

- Supporting learners and their parents/families (i.e., family involvement with schools, adult literacy programming), as learners move through public education;
- Encouraging learners to complete Grade 12 or equivalent, including establishing targets;
- Collaborating to facilitate transitions of First Nations learners who move to and from First Nations schools;
- Early detection of learning disabilities and assisting learners in overcoming learning difficulties and disabilities;
- Curriculum development that reflects local Aboriginal history, cultures, traditions, languages and learning approaches, where appropriate;
- Increasing the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers, as well as promoting cultural awareness among non-Aboriginal teachers;

- Increasing Canadian society's awareness of First Nations, Inuit and Métis through curriculum development that reflects Aboriginal history, cultures and traditions;
- A stronger Aboriginal voice and involvement, where appropriate, within educational structures;
- Strengthening relationships and linkages between public school systems and First Nation education systems, including sharing of knowledge and expertise; and,
- Gathering the data to inform research and policy decisions, performance measurement and reporting.

Respecting provincial/territorial jurisdiction in education, the Government of Canada is prepared, through agreements with provinces and territories, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and relevant Aboriginal organizations, to support innovative educational initiatives to improve outcomes for all Aboriginal learners within the public education system.

HOUSING

Affordable, stable and good quality housing is essential to ensuring positive outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their communities. Aboriginal peoples experience some of the worst housing conditions in Canada. Housing influences many aspects of life: individual health and well-being, educational achievement, social interactions, labour market attachment and community identity. From a broader economic perspective, the housing sector provides employment, creates investment opportunities and stimulates and supports economic activity.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to the goal of closing the gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in housing conditions and housing opportunities, in a manner that strengthens their self-reliance.

Achieving this goal will require re-thinking current approaches to Aboriginal housing policy, services and supports, increasing housing supply, and maintaining the existing stock in good condition, through investments that address urgent needs as well as long-term sustainable solutions. Aboriginal peoples must be involved in determining their own housing solutions, and flexible approaches need to be applied to address regional, community and individual circumstances. The needs of Aboriginal women will be addressed.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to measuring progress towards closing the gap in access to affordable, suitable and adequate housing for Aboriginal peoples, as measured by a reduction in levels of core housing need. Core housing need is defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as affordability – costing less than 30% of total before-tax household income; suitability – enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household; and adequacy – no outstanding major repairs are required.

Housing Partnerships

The Government of Canada and provinces and territories are committed to working collaboratively with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, with the support of Aboriginal housing providers, to improve housing opportunities in the off reserve or non reserve context, or pursuant to self-government agreements, and to enhance and build housing partnerships, by:

- Supporting new housing initiatives, building on best practices, that span the housing continuum, including emergency shelters, transitional and affordable housing, social/subsidized housing, home ownership, and the repair and maintenance of existing housing stock;
- Examining their respective government policies and regulations that may impede housing development in support of greater self-reliance, such as market and community-based approaches;
- Supporting housing assistance on the basis of need;
- Supporting housing solutions for Aboriginal women in transition and single parents by increasing operating and program supports;
- Sharing housing expertise to support capacity development in areas like community planning, project development, portfolio administration and management; and,
- Increasing opportunities for skills training, apprenticeships, employment and business development in housing related areas.

The Government of Canada is prepared to make investments in the off/non-reserve context, recognizing the responsibility of provinces and territories in the area of housing. Innovative Aboriginal housing agreements among the federal, provincial and territorial governments, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and Aboriginal housing providers, with flexible funding arrangements, will be developed through regional-based discussions, recognizing differing circumstances and existing relationships.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Economic opportunities encompass activities both within First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities as well as Aboriginal involvement in broader regional, national and international economies. It includes opportunities for wealth creation among both individuals and communities, including opportunities arising from the implementation of Aboriginal and treaty rights and land claims agreements. It is a process of engagement whereby Aboriginal individuals and communities both contribute to and fully benefit from Canada's economic growth and prosperity. Critical to increasing economic opportunities is developing and maintaining the social and economic factors that support balanced growth and promote healthy and skilled individuals and communities with the capacity to create wealth and participate fully in the economy. This recognizes the impact and importance of economic opportunities within health, housing and education sectors.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree that opportunities for early actions must be seized. Further, they agree that regionally-based strategic frames that can address economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples within the circumstances of each of the diverse regions of Canada could assist in:

- Addressing the key components of economic opportunities for all Aboriginal peoples in areas such as economic infrastructure, training and skills development, connectivity, improving the regulatory environment, resource development, and business development; and,
- Facilitating effective economic opportunity partnerships and relationships among all parties (i.e. federal/provincial/territorial governments, Aboriginal communities and institutions, and the private sector).

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to initiate regional distinctions-based processes, which are inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples, as well as with federal-provincial-territorial governments and private sector representatives to identify economic opportunity strategies. Based on regional discussions, Economic Development/Industry and Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders will develop regionally-based strategic frames to facilitate economic opportunities and partnerships and report through the multilateral process(es) to First Ministers.

HEALTH

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agreed on September 13, 2004 to work together to develop a blueprint to improve the health status of all Aboriginal peoples. Health Ministers, Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders worked over the past year to develop a Blueprint on Aboriginal Health. The efforts included broad consultation at the national and regional levels and were intended to lead to concrete initiatives to:

- improve delivery of and access to health services;
- ensure that Aboriginal peoples benefit fully from improvements to Canadian health systems; and,
- put in place health promotion and disease prevention measures as well as programs that will address other determinants of health (e.g., housing, education).

This will be achieved without unnecessary duplication and creation of parallel health care systems.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders reaffirm their commitment to action and further agree to the goal of closing the gap in health status between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, recognizing that the achievement of long term goals requires long term funding commitments.

Improving the health status of Aboriginal Peoples including First Nations, Inuit and Métis regardless of where they live is essential to improving their overall quality of life. Although progress has been made, current strategies have not succeeded in closing the gap in health status between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. Achieving this goal will require all relevant parties to work together in partnership at the national or regional levels.

The Blueprint is a work in progress. It is a 10-year transformative plan on Aboriginal Health which contains First Nations, Métis and Inuit frameworks and will guide the federal government in its collaboration with its partners. Implementation will occur both through federal initiatives as well as through the development of plans at the level of each province and territory through tripartite negotiated agreements that respect the constitutional roles and responsibilities of governments. These initiatives and plans will be developed by parties working together and will identify priorities for action and investment. The federal government recognizes that these initiatives and plans require partnerships and sustained federal investments both on and off reserve and in the North including in Inuit regions. These investments will build on the \$700 million, already committed at the September 13, 2004 Special Meeting of

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders. These initiatives and plans could notably focus on such areas as:

- mental health, suicide and addictions;
- nutrition and food security;
- diabetes prevention and treatment;
- public health;
- continuing care;
- telehealth;
- maternal, child and youth health.

In addressing these priorities, a holistic and distinctions–based approach will be adopted.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders support Ministers of Health and Aboriginal Affairs Ministers continuing to work collaboratively with Aboriginal Peoples including First Nations, Inuit and Métis regardless of where they live to turn their commitments into concrete action at the regional level and national level.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders further agree to measure progress in closing the gap, as assessed by key indicators. Partners will work to strengthen the capacity to assess progress and refine health indicators.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND MOVING FORWARD

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders are committed to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal peoples and federal, provincial and territorial governments. These relationships will be based on enhanced collaboration, effective working partnerships and mutual respect.

The Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments agree that Aboriginal peoples need the capacity to more effectively participate and contribute to the development of policies, programs and services that affect them.

Regional Implementation

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree the commitments outlined in this document must be implemented by working together at the regional level. Implementation will focus on developing practical approaches through existing tripartite or bilateral processes or through new processes where necessary. These

regional processes will respect the distinctions among First Nations, Inuit and Métis and will also be inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples. Regional circumstances will be taken into account.

Implementation will also include setting targets, monitoring and reporting progress at a regional level.

First Ministers will direct their governments, through Aboriginal Affairs and appropriate sector Ministers, to participate in these distinctions-based regional processes with regional Aboriginal organizations.

For the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments, implementation of the commitments outlined in this document will be the joint responsibility of sector ministers and ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs.

Multilateral

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders also recognize that there are overarching issues of joint interest and functions that are best discussed through an annual meeting that includes all parties. Separate and apart from regional implementation, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders also recognize the need for discussing issues collectively through distinctions-based multilateral forums.

Aboriginal Affairs ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders will meet annually for a two-day session to review progress. Sectoral ministers may also participate or report on progress as appropriate. The two days will include distinct First Nations, Inuit and Métis forums with the respective Leaders, the Government of Canada and relevant provinces and territories. Participants will:

- Monitor and report on progress, in collaboration with sector ministers, to First Ministers towards closing the gap based on agreed indicators;
- Support preparation for future meetings of First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders;
- Discuss issues and interests of Aboriginal peoples in urban areas;
- Address emerging issues (e.g. economic opportunities, violence against women, environmental issues);
- Provide advice to regional processes;
- Identify linkages between sectors; and

- Share information on best practices.

First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree that, in order to assess progress on commitments, they will need to receive regular reports. They will meet again in two to three years when they are in a position to measure progress.

FIRST NATIONS

Strengthening Relationships and Moving Forward

First Ministers and First Nations Leaders acknowledge the special relationship between First Nations and the Crown. This is complemented by the commitment of the Government of Canada and First Nations to the joint development of a bilateral implementation plan.

First Nations and First Ministers recognize the importance to First Nations of self government in achieving political, social, economic and cultural development and improved quality of life.

At the national level, a First Nations Multilateral Forum will be established to facilitate discussions with the Government of Canada and all provincial and territorial governments except Nunavut on First Nations-specific issues.

The Forum will be convened annually at the Ministerial level to coordinate efforts and monitor progress:

- The Forum will be composed of ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, First Nations leaders and sectoral ministers as appropriate and agreed to by First Nations and federal, provincial and territorial governments.
- The Forum will advise regional multilateral processes, create linkages across sectors and guide and monitor the implementation of national commitments, as appropriate.
- The Forum will also report to future First Ministers Meetings.
- Reporting will be based on a set of preliminary national indicators which could include:
 - Life expectancy, infant mortality, childhood obesity and premature mortality;

- Educational attainment, linked to language acquisition, and employment;
- Housing affordability, suitability and adequacy, and water quality.

Education

The Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations governments/ organizations, is committed to working to improve the educational outcomes of First Nations learners by:

- Implementing First Nations jurisdiction and control over education on-reserve or in self-governing First Nations, with the collaboration, through negotiation, of provincial/territorial governments;
- Developing First Nations regional and sub-regional K-12 education systems and supporting First Nations school governing bodies (outside public education systems);
- Supporting high quality environments for First Nations learners on reserve, and those attending schools established pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements, through investments in facilities and innovations in curricula and teachers/administrators;
- Developing and supporting First Nations/provincial/territorial/federal protocols or arrangements to work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nations learners; and,
- Supporting the development and implementation of First Nations school systems performance management, assessment and reporting mechanisms.

Provinces and territories, First Nations and, when appropriate, the Government of Canada, will work together to better support all First Nations learners moving between First Nations schools and public education systems, including:

- reciprocal tuition arrangements;
- effective interface between First Nations and provincial/territorial teacher certification, and certification of teachers in First Nations language and cultures;
- recognition of graduation requirements;
- exchange of appropriate student information;
- data sharing;
- professional development; and,
- reciprocal sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Housing

The Government of Canada and First Nations commit to work together to address housing needs by:

- Developing a series of new initiatives that focuses on enhancing and supporting First Nations control over housing on reserve and pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements. These initiatives will develop new approaches in First Nations housing, including the development of new institutional arrangements.
- Developing practical means and tools required to fundamentally change the delivery of housing over time on reserve and pursuant to self-government and sectoral agreements. Changes will include support for increased market based housing, including the ability to lever funds in financial markets, capacity development, increased investments in housing-related training (e.g. training and apprenticeships in construction and skilled trades) and infrastructure and ensuring housing investments are focused on areas of greatest need. The needs of First Nations women will be addressed, including housing issues arising from marital or relationship breakdown.
- Exploring new options to support greater community access to land and improved land management capacity. Alternative financing instruments and new relationships with First Nation-controlled financial institutions will also be developed. Economic opportunities that flow from these initiatives (e.g. home construction and maintenance) must be managed in a manner that maximizes the direct benefits to First Nations communities.
- Supporting social/subsidized housing requirements. Assistance to address immediate housing shortages and overcrowding will be provided on the basis of need.

Where there is agreement, First Nations and the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments will create new housing partnerships with regard to First Nations living off reserve.

The Government of Canada accepts responsibility for assisting First Nations with respect to necessary potable water infrastructure on reserve. Canada will jointly work with First Nations to develop the necessary infrastructure required for an effective housing strategy on reserve. This means accelerating activities to ensure the safety of water supplies within established water and wastewater standards, as well as continued improvements in other basic infrastructure including roads and fire protection. Particular attention will be given to developing and implementing, with First Nations, a regime for the testing and regulation of water in First Nations

communities. Collaboration with provinces and relevant territories will be obtained through agreements. Indicators to measure progress on these critical elements related to improving housing conditions on reserve will be developed jointly by First Nations and the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and relevant territorial governments.

INUIT

Strengthening Relationships and Moving Forward

The rights of Inuit as an Aboriginal people of Canada are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. In addition, the federal commitments made in this document must be developed in a manner consistent with the Inuit Partnership Accord signed in May 2005, including any present or future commitments as a result of the Government of Canada – Inuit Action Plan.

These commitments should not be interpreted or implemented so as to infringe on any rights of Inuit under the Land Claims Agreements. Reference to Inuit organizations includes but is not limited to Land Claims Organizations and relevant institutions serving Inuit in Canada.

To ensure that Inuit benefit equitably from the commitments set out by First Ministers, Inuit-specific strategies must be adopted to accommodate the unique conditions of arctic environments, the distinctive features of Inuit culture, as well as the needs of Inuit who reside outside land claims areas.

The Government of Canada, relevant provinces and territories and Inuit will work together to strengthen relationships building on existing regional and bilateral agreements, like the Canada/Inuit Partnership Accord and the Nunavut/Inuit “Working Together”. This means enhancing, with agreement of the parties, processes and arrangements to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for Inuit. The parties will determine priority issues and actions through discussion and joint agreement.

An Inuit Multilateral Forum will be established, linked to the annual meeting of Aboriginal Affairs ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders, to facilitate discussions with the Government of Canada and the Governments of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories and Nunavut on Inuit-specific issues. This forum will advise and support regional Inuit processes, assess progress made on First Ministers Meeting commitments to Inuit, create linkages across sectors and report to future First Ministers Meetings.

Education

The Inuit and the relevant provinces and territories, with the support of the Government of Canada, commit to develop an Inuit-specific approach by incorporating Inuit traditional knowledge, experience, language and practices in education and lifelong learning, as a means of improving Inuit education outcomes by:

- Enhancing and/or developing an Inuit-specific approach to education within public education systems to improve Inuit educational outcomes, in partnership with regional Inuit organizations, relevant provincial/territorial governments and the Government of Canada.
- Working at all levels, the immediate priorities for K-12 innovation supports will be to:
 - develop Inuit-specific curriculum;
 - promote, preserve and protect Inuit languages; and,
 - train Inuit teachers, curriculum developers and administrators.
- Exploring within the next 12 months the establishment of a National Inuit Education Resource and Research Centre, in collaboration with regional Inuit organizations, relevant provincial/territorial governments and the Government of Canada to help promote an Inuit-specific approach to education, coordinate best practices and conduct Inuit-specific research.

Housing

The Government of Canada will work collaboratively with Inuit and relevant provinces and territories to address housing challenges by:

- Providing immediate housing relief in Inuit communities focusing on new construction and renovation. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are committed to working with Inuit to address housing shortages and overcrowding in the Inuit regions. In the near term, primarily social/subsidized housing is required.
- Developing an Inuit housing approach which offers housing that is appropriate, affordable and suitable in the four Inuit regions: Labrador, Nunavik, Nunavut and Inuvialuit. Consistent with an Inuit-specific housing approach, the Government of Canada will enter into partnership agreements with relevant Inuit organizations and relevant provinces/territories to create an Inuit Housing Institute. The Institute will enhance capacity building in Inuit communities. It will facilitate the sharing of best practices and the exchange of information on ways to improve

housing conditions for Inuit regions. Funding for the Institute would be in addition to any funding provided for the construction, repair and maintenance and development of Inuit housing.

- Creating capacity at the community level and consequently reducing the costs of construction and maintenance while maximizing the economic development opportunities within Inuit communities. The longer term goal of an Inuit housing approach is greater self-reliance, and moving forward from an assisted housing approach to a market approach in the Inuit regions. The need for longer term, sustainable efforts and resources is also recognized.
- Linking investments in housing for Inuit to economic development and skills development initiatives and opportunities. Accordingly, the Government of Canada, relevant provinces and territories and Inuit agree to share and build upon their expertise by using multi-year housing investments to create economic development initiatives, increasing Inuit employment, training more Inuit in the construction trades, and assembling and constructing housing in the community by the community.

MÉTIS

Strengthening Relationships and Moving Forward

The rights of the Métis, as an Aboriginal people, are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. First Ministers and Métis Leaders acknowledge the special relationship between Métis and the Crown. As well, First Ministers and Métis Leaders recognize the importance to the Métis of self government in achieving political, social, economic and cultural development and improved quality of life.

Strengthening relationships between the Government of Canada, relevant provincial and territorial governments, Métis groups and organizations and, where recognized, Métis governments will be a key component in realizing change and closing the gap in the quality of life between Métis and other Canadians. To this end, in partnership with Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provinces and territories commit to:

- Building upon existing bilateral agreements, such as the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement, as well as trilateral arrangements, in order to facilitate the recognition of the distinctive place of the Métis people in the Canadian

federation in a manner that is consistent with the common law and existing jurisprudence.

- Establishing a Métis Nation Multilateral Forum to facilitate discussions between the Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provincial/territorial governments. This multilateral forum will advise and support regional Métis processes, assess progress made on First Ministers Meeting commitments to Métis, create linkages across sectors and report to future First Ministers Meetings. In addition, where relevant provinces/territories and other Métis groups are willing, appropriate partnerships and/or other multilateral forums may be developed.
- Collaboratively renewing regional Métis tripartite processes in order for these processes to better reflect the evolving relationships between Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provincial and territorial governments based on commitments flowing from this First Ministers Meeting as well as emerging issues.
- Exploring options with Métis to support and enhance ongoing work in relation to the establishment and maintenance of objectively verifiable Métis identification systems.
- The Government of Canada commits that implementation of bilateral commitments flowing from the First Ministers Meeting will be consistent with and flow through existing Métis-federal bilateral agreements.

Education

In partnership with Métis, the Government of Canada, along with relevant provinces and territories, are committed to

- Developing and supporting initiatives to improve Métis educational outcomes within public education systems through K-12 innovation supports (e.g., stay in school programs, literacy initiatives, mentoring and role model programs, in-school cultural programs, etc.) that are developed and/or delivered in collaboration with Métis, the Government of Canada as well as relevant provincial and territorial governments.
- Exploring, within 12 months, the development of a Métis Nation Centre of Excellence in Education and Innovation through collaborative efforts between the Métis, the Government of Canada, relevant provincial and territorial governments as well as other possible partners. The Centre would focus on developing educational materials and resources, as well as undertaking research. In

addition, where relevant provinces/territories agree, they will work with other Métis groups to develop appropriate education partnerships.

- Enhancing programs and services related to K-12 and transitions delivered by existing Métis educational institutions such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute (Saskatchewan) and Louis Riel Institute (Manitoba) and, where there is agreement, exploring options for the development of new Métis educational institutions.

The Government of Canada will support these commitments through collaborative arrangements between relevant provincial and territorial governments and the Métis.

Housing

In partnership with Métis, the Government of Canada, along with relevant provincial and territorial governments, are committed to addressing the unique housing challenges and needs of Métis by:

- Making strategic and immediate investments in new Métis housing and in the ongoing maintenance of existing Métis-delivered housing with a view to improving Métis delivery and control of, as well as access to, affordable and social/subsidized housing.
- Enhancing existing housing relationships and, where there is agreement, creating new ones, through Métis housing partnership agreements, with flexible funding arrangements, between Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provinces and territories
- Developing a Métis housing approach which offers housing that is sustainable, appropriate and affordable for Métis. To this end, within 12 months, the Government of Canada will work with representatives of the Métis and relevant provinces and territories with a view to developing a regionally-focused Métis Nation Housing Institute. The Institute will work towards supporting new Métis social/subsidized housing and increased Métis control over housing in rural, urban, and northern environments; capacity development for Métis housing agencies/providers and assist in the creation of new ones where appropriate; policy development and analysis in support of Métis housing; research and data collection; and developing funding and investment models to support Métis housing.

CONCLUSION

This document represents a shared commitment to action by all parties. The initiatives set out in this document are the first step in a 10-year dedicated effort to improve the quality of life of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Based on their shared commitment, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to take immediate action, to build on their commitments over time, wherever possible, and to move forward in a manner that will achieve the maximum results for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada which include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

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