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## Canada – First Nations Joint Action Plan

Canada and First Nations have an enduring historic relationship based on mutual respect, friendship and support. Under this government, there has been a shift in Canada's relationship with First Nations, exemplified by the Prime Minister's historic apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the launch of the Specific Claims Tribunal, and the endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Building on this relationship, Canada as represented by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and First Nations as represented by the Assembly of First Nations National Chief agree to a joint action plan to improve the long-term prosperity for First Nations people and all Canadians.

Through the Canada – First Nation Joint Action Plan (The Plan), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) commit to advancing a constructive relationship based on the core principles of mutual understanding, respect, ensuring mutually acceptable outcomes and accountability.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations are working on multiple initiatives jointly and in parallel to improve the lives of First Nations across Canada. While this plan does not comprise the full extent of the work underway between AANDC and AFN it is intended to guide some of our actions going forward.

The Plan is intended to strengthen the Crown-First Nation relationship at the national level and will not adversely affect or impair any existing or new Crown - First Nations initiatives on a regional or local basis.

### Principles

The Joint Action Plan is based on common goals and shared principles. On these bases we have identified shared priority areas for action and commit to work together in making concrete and practical progress which will benefit First Nations and all citizens through:

- Improving relationships and strong partnerships between Canada and First Nations respectful of Aboriginal and Treaty rights as recognized and affirmed in the *Constitution Act, 1982*
- Building effective, appropriate, transparent and fully accountable governance structures
- Empowering success of individuals through access to education and opportunity
- Enabling strong, sustainable, and self-sufficient communities
- Creating conditions to accelerate economic development opportunities and maximize benefits for all Canadians
- Respecting the role of First Nations' culture and language in our history and future

### Scope

Canada and the Assembly of First Nations recognize the importance of communication and coordination to advance clear, attainable goals that will contribute to longer term positive change in respect to:

1. Education
2. Accountability, transparency, capacity and good governance
3. Economic development
4. Negotiation and Implementation

## Joint Commitments

AANDC and the AFN commit to:

### 1. Education

- **A joint engagement process to make recommendations on a framework providing the basis to deliver quality K-12 education to First Nation children living on reserve.** A national panel will hold a series of roundtables across the country and set up other activities to engage parents, students, teachers, elders, educators and all those with an interest in improving First Nation education. The panel will make recommendations to the Minister and the National Chief on options to make concrete and positive changes for First Nation students, including the possibility of new legislation to improve the governance framework and clarify accountability for First Nation elementary and secondary education. The panel will report by the end of the 2011 calendar year.
- Advance our joint commitment to healing and reconciliation by moving forward with **repealing the residential schools provisions of the *Indian Act***. Removal of provisions of the *Indian Act* which give authority to establish residential schools and remove children from their homes and communities will pave the way for broader reforms to First Nations education.

### 2. Accountability, transparency, capacity and good governance

- Initiatives which increase **transparency** and **accountability** of First Nations governments to their respective constituents, including initiatives to improve First Nations electoral processes such as those advanced by regional First Nations organizations.
- Continued development and implementation of **emergency management frameworks** through collaborative working relationships between First Nations, neighbouring communities, federal/provincial/territorial governments, and other agencies. This work will be undertaken using the four pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.
- **Effective First Nation Governments** through jointly advancing specific measures including:
  - Community Development Framework
  - A dialogue on broader First Nation Citizenship issues to address longer-term interests and issues relating to Status, membership and citizenship within First Nations

### 3. Economic Development

- Building on the Federal Aboriginal Economic Development Framework by establishing a **Task Force on the Activation of First Nations Economies** comprised of business leaders to review and provide recommendations focused on moving away from the *Indian Act* to explore concrete initiatives aimed at unlocking the economic potential of First Nations, including improvements to the additions to reserve policy.

#### 4. **Negotiation and Implementation**

- Engage in meaningful dialogue on:
  - **The future of historic Treaty Relationships** to confirm areas of common ground with Treaty First Nations and to develop concrete options to reinvigorate treaty relationships which builds on the outcomes of the 2008 INAC-AFN Treaty Conference.
  - Joint review of the "Justice at Last" initiative, which contributed to progress on specific claims
  - Ways to improve the negotiation and implementation of **comprehensive claims**

#### **Ongoing Dialogue**

Finally, AANDC and the AFN will prepare options for the possibility of holding a **First Nations-Crown Gathering**. This could also provide a forum for joint discussions and presentations by First Nations, Governments, and key stakeholders.

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