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The New Relationship with Aboriginal People

Premier's Statement on the New Relationship with Aboriginal People

May 4, 2006

VICTORIA – Premier Gordon Campbell made the following statement today in the legislature regarding the New Relationship with Aboriginal People:

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"Mr. Speaker, we are privileged to be joined today by the members of the BC First Nations Leadership Council, representing the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

"On behalf of all members, I want to thank the Leadership Council and First Nations elders, chiefs and communities across B.C. for helping to forge a new relationship with our government, for all British Columbians. I want to thank you for your dedication, resolve and perseverance in working to build a better British Columbia for all of our citizens.

"Together, we are committed to building a constructive, new government-to-government relationship, based on mutual respect, recognition, and reconciliation. We are working to build a new, vital, modern British Columbia. One that sees its true potential in the strength of its people, cultural diversity, common heritage, and land and resources.

"We are committed to pursuing new horizons of hope and opportunity, by moving beyond the barriers that have held us back for far too long. We are committed to opening up new dialogue, new understanding and new access to resources – to close the gaps in health, education, housing and economic opportunity that have failed Aboriginal people throughout Canada's entire history.

"Mr. Speaker, this is my government's commitment to British Columbia's Aboriginal people. It is the also the Government of Canada's solemn undertaking, as a signatory of the Transformative Change Accord it signed last November with our Province and the Leadership Council representing the First Nations of British Columbia.

"That tri-partite agreement stands as a binding declaration of our governments' mutual resolve to act upon the vision and commitment of all first ministers and national Aboriginal leaders, as set out in the Kelowna agreement. That document was the product of an unprecedented government-to-government collaboration. It was agreed to by the Prime Minister of Canada and all Premiers as an article of good faith and as a compact to restore trust, hope and confidence with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

"More importantly, it is 'a shared commitment to action by all parties' – including the Government of Canada – that speaks to 'a 10-year dedicated effort to improve the quality of life of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.'

"On Tuesday, the new federal government tabled its first budget since that historic agreement. This government recognizes and appreciates that that budget includes a considerable amount of new funding in each of the next two years for improvements to housing and other services for Aboriginal people. Indeed, the amount set aside for new housing, water and other infrastructure over next two years is nearly half of the amount anticipated within the next five years under the Kelowna agreement. It is also noteworthy that the federal government has reiterated its commitment to close the gaps in education, health determinants and economic opportunity.

"It is difficult at this point to precisely quantify how much new funding is being budgeted pursuant to that agreement, because it has nowhere been identified as such. However, it is undeniable that this

effort will take a multi-year commitment that stretches far beyond the next two years. I understand that the new government may well have its own ideas on how to best advance the objectives set in out in that document.

"It must be stated unequivocally that this will require significant financial resources beyond what has been committed to date. After an 18-month cross-Canada collaborative effort, the identified amount for the next five years was \$5 billion.

"The trust relationship that was the core of the Kelowna meeting demands decisive action and unflagging affirmation. As I said at that meeting, the honour of the Crown is at stake. The Crown, represented by its federal, provincial and territorial governments, must uphold that trust and act honourably. It must respect the letter, spirit and content of the undertaking of all 14 of Canada's first ministers only five short months ago.

"Today, I want there to be no doubt where this Premier and this government stands. We stand behind our word. We stand firm on the commitment we made in Kelowna and to the Transformative Change Accord. And we will stand up strongly to ensure both of those documents are honoured in British Columbia.

"We cannot stand passively by and let this product of unprecedented consensus and collaboration wither and die for lack of Crown commitment. This government will work with the federal government to achieve the goals set out in Kelowna. We will work with the Leadership Council and Aboriginal people on- and off-reserve to ensure that the Crown's commitment to closing the gaps is met – one way or another.

"We know that will demand new approaches, new partnerships, new revenue sharing and significant new stable, long-term resources. I meant what I said at that forum – and our government will deliver on its promise for all British Columbians.

"While there may be disappointment in this part of the federal budget, there is also significant room for hope. The Prime Minister has reiterated his clear commitment to reform intergovernmental fiscal relations that will ensure stable, long-term funding mechanisms that better serve all citizens.

"Municipal and First Nations governments also need to be considered as part of that undertaking. British Columbia will put that issue squarely on the table in addressing the fiscal imbalance at the first ministers meeting later this year. It will pursue new vehicles that are less susceptible to the uncertain winds of political change. Treaties can be instrumental in that regard, and this government will pursue them with renewed vigour and new flexibility.

"The future of First Nations as a true partner in Canada, with constitutionally protected rights and title, warrants a fundamental rethinking of confederation. All governments, including First Nations governments, need to know they can count on stable revenue streams to provide the services for which they are responsible. That was implicit in the five-year commitment made in Kelowna. Long-term funding must be found, focused and committed if we are to meet the goal of closing the gaps for Aboriginal people within the next decade.

"Mr. Speaker, I characterized that agreement as Canada's 'moment of truth.' It was our time to do something that has eluded our nation for 138 years. It was our chance to end the disparities in health, education, housing and economic opportunity. All first ministers rose to that moment of truth alongside Canada's Aboriginal leaders to undertake that challenge. Having made that extraordinary national commitment, any unilateral reversal will invite consequences that only make us poorer as a nation.

"We have seen the consequences of Canada's collective political failure to its first citizens. We know the toll it has taken on Aboriginal children and families – and there are no more excuses.

"We have seen the consequences of shattered hope spawned by over a century of betrayal, denial and negligence by governments of every stripe. There are no more excuses.

"We have seen the consequences of confrontation, litigation and opportunities lost. We know too well the consequences of frustration, anger, mistrust and despair. There are no more excuses.

"So I say to the federal government – this is Canada's moment of truth. I believe that the Prime Minister and his government are committed to closing the gaps identified in health, education, housing and economic opportunity. The Prime Minister and his government have committed to the objectives and principles of the agreement reached in Kelowna and hundreds of millions of dollars

have been earmarked to advance them in the next two years.

"Let us confirm the new partnerships that were promised, let us confirm long-term funding and let us find the strength and the commitment to meet this challenge on behalf of all Canadians. Let us talk about how to invest that money to maximize its benefit to Aboriginal people. Let us talk about the results we will see in the lives of Aboriginal children and communities across this country as we build a stronger Canada.

"And let's move forward together, guided by the light of hope that was lit by all governments in Kelowna, to build a better Canada for Aboriginal Canadians.

"Thank you."

[Click here for video](#)

The New Relationship Progress Report

VICTORIA – The Province and the First Nations Leadership Council have released the first issue of the New Relationship Progress Report.

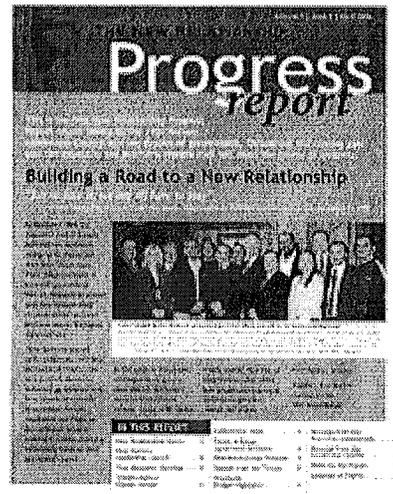
The report is a jointly issued quarterly newsletter to keep British Columbians informed of discussions and activities taking place under the New Relationship. The newsletter is distributed to First Nations, Aboriginal organizations, business, industry, government agencies and media.

The inaugural newsletter highlights key achievements, including establishment of the \$100-million New Relationship Trust, the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic and strategies to close the social and economic gap that exist for First Nations in British Columbia.

The Government of British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council have committed to on-going discussions founded on the principles of mutual respect, recognition and reconciliation of Aboriginal rights. The First Nations Leadership Council is represented by the political executives of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations.

The New Relationship Progress Report is also available online at www.gov.bc.ca/arr/, www.ubcic.bc.ca, www.bcafn.ca and www.fns.bc.ca.

[The New Relationship Progress Report](#)  (PDF - 411KB)



Government Tables \$100 Million Trust for First Nations Capacity Building



Left to right: Dave Porter, First Nations Summit, Chief Stewart Phillip, President of Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Premier Gordon Campbell, Minister Tom Christensen, Grand Chief Ed John, First Nations Summit.

\$100 Million Enables First Nations to Nations to Build Capacity

March 21, 2006

VICTORIA – Government has tabled legislation to enact the \$100-million New Relationship Trust that will help fund long-term capacity-building for First Nations, Tom Christensen, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, announced today.

"Building capacity in First Nations communities is a clear priority for our government," said Christensen. "This fund has been established to provide First Nations with the tools, training and skills to participate in social and economic decision-making in their communities. It will also help to foster leadership among First Nations youth and bring about greater self-reliance, prosperity and certainty for First Nations and all British Columbians."

Announced in the September 2005 Budget Update, the New Relationship fund was designed to support capacity-building for First Nations so they can effectively participate in land and resource management and social programs for their communities.

Shawn Atleo, B.C. Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, is encouraged by the introduction

of the New Relationship legislation.

"I have a real sense of hope that this is a clear demonstration of the government's willingness and commitment to move forward on the vision set out in the New Relationship, and it marks an important step for our people in terms of shared decision-making in land and forestry issues," said Atleo. "Undoubtedly, we are at a turning point in our journey towards reconciliation, and we as leaders, as well as the Province, must carry forward this momentum for the benefit of our communities."

The New Relationship Trust Act establishes that a corporation will be created to manage the fund. A seven-member board of directors will also be established. The act states that the board will solicit and consider the opinions of First Nations and the public in the development of a three-year strategic plan.

"I welcome the establishment of the \$100-million New Relationship Trust fund," said Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "These capacity funds will enable our First Nations communities to develop comprehensive land-use plans necessary to facilitate shared decision-making and resource revenue-sharing between ourselves and the Province."

Government consulted and collaborated with the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations to develop the legislation framework. The principles that guided the process included accountability and flexibility to ensure the fund would meet the needs of First Nations and support government's long-term vision of economic prosperity for First Nations.

"First Nations in B.C. are encouraged by the creation of the New Relationship Trust as an indication of the provincial government's commitment in moving forward to an era of transformative change that we hope will lead to greater recognition and reconciliation of First Nations title and rights in B.C.," said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive. "The New Relationship Trust will be an important step in assisting First Nations to build and strengthen their internal capacity to better manage their lands and resources."

The Province is building a New Relationship with First Nations founded on the principles of mutual respect, reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal rights. The goal is to ensure Aboriginal people share in the economic and social development of British Columbia, in line with the five great goals for a golden decade.

The provincial government and B.C. First Nations' organizations are working together to develop a new relationship founded on reconciliation, recognition and respect of Aboriginal rights and title.

About the New Relationship

British Columbia is leading change that has the potential to reshape our social and economic landscape and create a more inclusive and prosperous future for all British Columbians.

The courts have been clear that government has an obligation to consult with First Nations with respect to decisions that have the potential to impact Aboriginal rights and title.

In March 2005, the Province began meetings with representatives of the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the B.C. Assembly of First Nations to develop new approaches for consultation and accommodation and a vision for a new relationship to deal with Aboriginal concerns based on openness, transparency and collaboration - one that reduces uncertainty, litigation and conflict for all British Columbians.

A five-page document, outlining the vision and principles of the new relationship, was developed as a result of these meetings. It broaches the topic of a new government-to-government relationship with First Nations, including new processes and structures for coordination, and working together to make decisions about the use of land and resources. The document proposes discussion of revenue-sharing to reflect Aboriginal rights and title interests and to assist First Nations with economic development. In addition, the document sets out a plan for developing scenarios under which these concepts could be made to work.

This is directly related to the strategic vision that the Province has laid before British Columbians.

1. To make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent;
2. To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness;
3. To build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors;
4. To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none; and
5. To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

These goals are consistent with the shared vision to restore, revitalize and strengthen First Nations' communities and cannot be achieved without the participation of Aboriginal leaders and organizations. This vision document sets the cross-government approach we will use to work together on such goals as raising Aboriginal health outcomes to the Canadian average within a decade and developing a comprehensive strategy to better coordinate funding and support for Aboriginal children's services.

Discussions related to the new relationship are proceeding and will include consultation with such stakeholders as industry and local governments.

- [The New Relationship](#)  (PDF - 25KB)

First Nations New Relationship Trust Fund

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation established a unique, \$100-million fund to help First Nations build institutional and community capacity. This funding will help First Nations to participate in the management of lands and resources and to take advantage of economic, cultural and social opportunities in the province. The Trust will be managed by a seven-member board of directors, independent from government.

First Nations New Relationship Trust Fund - [pdf version](#)  (PDF - 85KB)

[New Relationship Trust Fund Board](#)

[Premier's Speech at First Nations Summit](#)  (PDF - 38KB)

First Ministers' Meeting, Premier's Closing Remarks

November 25, 2005

First, let me again acknowledge the Westbank First Nation and the Okanagan Nation for welcoming us to their territories. Let me thank the chiefs and elders who came and shared their stories and worked with us through the last two days.

The contributions of this forum will have an impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians – Aboriginal Canadians, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

It has taken us 138 years as a nation to arrive at this moment. It has taken decades of dialogue and a tortured path of frustration and failure to bring us to this moment of clarity and commitment.

The commitments each of us have undertaken at this table are profound, far reaching, and fundamental to the Canada that we all aspire to build together.

Like everyone, I sincerely hope this moment will prove to be a pivotal moment in Canada's future.

For me, it has been the single most significant, poignant and promising act that we have been able to accomplish together.

As with the prime minister and the federal government with each of the provinces and the territories

and with the five national Aboriginal organizations, we have set a path for the future which I believe Canadians will embrace.

I would like to thank all of the premiers who spent a great deal of their time working towards this meeting, reaching out to their Métis, Inuit and First Nations leaders across their provinces and territories so that we could come here today with the fundamental shift in direction and a fundamental change in the relationship that we all share.

Minutes from now, this table will be empty. This room will be cleared. There will be silence.

Our job now, and our abiding commitment to one another and to the citizens we serve, is to ensure that the memory of this moment finds its voice and its force in history through our actions, through a new working relationship aimed at ensuring Canada's third solitude is henceforth recognized as a true founding partner in confederation, and through an action plan back-stopped by ongoing political commitment, genuine partnerships, and new funding to bridge the gaps for aboriginal children, families, and future generations.

Our duty now is to ensure that when this room goes dark, the light that has been lit, the light of hope that has been lit over the last two days, lives on and burns brighter, month after month, year after year in our hearts and in Canada's corridors of power.

Mr. Prime Minister, the honour of the Crown depends on our meeting these commitments. The honour of the Crown has been the silent partner in this room here and now. And with our words, its import is at stake.

I want to stress that from British Columbia's perspective, the honour of the Crown is the ultimate guarantor that we will leave this room with. We will enter a new era of respect and accommodation and reconciliation.

Jurisdictional overlaps or uncertainties must not be an excuse for inaction. We must not allow them to stand in the way of what we know is right to do.

Real progress on each front we have contemplated must be made. Constitutional wrangling must not become a refuge or an apology for inaction.

All of us at this table today are the leaders who must now take these new tools and get the job done. We're the leaders who must respect and embrace the explicit commitments and assurances that we have made to Aboriginal leaders and citizens across this country.

We're the leaders who will be held to account for making meaningful progress in health, education, housing, economic development for First Nation, Métis and Inuit people across Canada regardless of where they live.

The world looks at Canada and they aspire to be like Canada. They aspire to the model that Canada has set. A model of harmony, tolerance, understanding, cultural diversity and unlimited potential and promise.

Yesterday and today, we have looked at some of our failings as a country and we have embraced the idea that we can improve; we can be better. We can be better for all Canadians and we will be.

Prime Minister, the power of our endeavour is the true promise of the people of our country. Each of us as leaders must endeavour to put Canadian values into action as we leave this room.

I want to say a special thank you to the leaders of the national Aboriginal organizations because, indeed, for all of us, we should recognize the greatest risk at coming to this table was theirs.

It is sometimes easier to stand back and deal with the problems you have and say, "Let's not try something new. Let's not challenge the status quo. Let's stay mired in the past."

Each of the Aboriginal leaders who joined us looked to the future. Each of the Aboriginal leaders who have joined us and been part of this discussion in shaping the discussion and planning for their future said they were willing to take the risk on behalf of the people that they serve.

And I particularly want to recognize the exceptional leadership that has been shown by National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations.

It was the national chief who came to us and said, "Let us put aside the search for headlines and let

us look for solutions. Let us recognize that solutions will come not in a year or two, but that we will have to commit ourselves for a decade. We will have to commit resources. We will have to commit creativity. We'll have to commit to getting results, but most importantly we will have to relentlessly pursue this plan." We must relentlessly pursue it if we are to be successful.

And I want to thank all of the leaders. The Métis National Council, the ITK, the AFN, Council of Aboriginal People and the Native Women's Association of Canada for sharing with us their goals and their dreams.

And Prime Minister, I want to recognize and acknowledge the work of Minister Scott. I have traveled across the country a couple of times. He's traveled across the country dozens of times in pursuit of this agenda and laying out this plan.

And finally, let me say thank you to you, Prime Minister, because it is equally a risk for you to say, "Let's get together with the premiers again." Not a big risk. But it's a reasonable risk. I think that, Prime Minister, you opened a door for all of us and as you opened that door each premier walked through. As you opened that door, each Aboriginal leader came forward and said, "Let us guide you to a future that we can all embrace."

So, I want to say on behalf of all of us thank you for establishing this. Thank you for creating the opportunity for us to reach for a Canada that we all aspire to.

Someone once said, "Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

I am hopeful that what we have done in the last two days will create some magic for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people across this country. We will transform their lives and all Canadians will be proud of the efforts and the energy we put behind that. Thank you very much Prime Minister.

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