

# First Nations Implementation Plan

At the First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders Meeting in Kelowna, B.C. on November 24 & 25, 2005, First Ministers and First Nation Leaders committed, through the document: *First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap*, to strengthening relationships between First Nations and federal, provincial and territorial governments. In that spirit, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders have launched 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 benefit more fully 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 Aboriginal and treaty rights.

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

The purpose of the *First Nations Implementation Plan* is to reflect that federal commitments to promote the goals of the First Ministers Meeting (FMM) will be implemented in a manner consistent with the principles and objectives of the *First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments*.

The intent and purpose of the *First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments* is to commit the Parties to work jointly to promote meaningful processes for reconciliation and implementation of section 35 rights, with First Nation governments to achieve an improved quality of life, and to support policy transformation in other areas of common interest, affirming and having regard to the principles set out in the *Accord*.

## **Regional Implementation Approaches and National Process**

- Consistent with the agreement of First Ministers and First Nations' Leaders, the commitments in this Implementation Plan 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. Regional circumstances will be taken into account.



- Cooperation will be a cornerstone for partnership between Canada and First Nations. This requires honorable processes of negotiations and respect for requirements for consultation, accommodation, justification and First Nations' consent as may be appropriate to the circumstances.
- First Nations will be involved in the implementation processes related to the Government of Canada's FMM commitments and investments.
- First Ministers and First Nations Leaders have acknowledged the special relationship between First Nations and the Crown. The federal commitments made in the document: *First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap*, must be developed and implemented in a manner consistent with the *First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments*.
- 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, with the exception of Nunavut.
  - The Forum will advise and support 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.

- The Government of Canada and First Nations governments will work collaboratively with First Nations women to address their needs through their full participation in the development of culturally-relevant policies and programs that affect First Nations peoples.
- The Government of Canada and First Nations recognize, as reflected in the FMM Main Document, the role of provincial and territorial governments in supporting and complementing the joint efforts in this *First Nations Implementation Plan*.
- In addition to the undertakings in the Implementation Plan, there will be further discussions on how to address the unique challenges of implementing FMM Commitments with First Nations in the NWT and the Yukon.

## **Health**

The First Nations Framework in the Blueprint on Aboriginal Health identifies specific federal commitments to First Nations health.

The First Nations collective vision is to be served by their own distinct yet coordinated health system which ensures a full continuum of services, a holistic approach to health and the integrity of traditional healing practices.

In the context of the *First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments*, new approaches proposed in the Blueprint will be informed by any discussion of health within the treaty and fiduciary context.

The First Nations Blueprint Framework identifies several specific federal commitments including sustainability, strengthening the role and capacity of First Nations in public health, telehealth, and First Nations capacity in health research.

Further, the Government of Canada commits to invest to enhance First Nations health programs and services, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the First Nations governments and organizations to deliver health services including through accreditation of facilities, streamlined reporting and patient supports.

First Nations, provinces and territories, and the Government of Canada agree on the need for improved coordination and collaboration in addressing gaps between and within federally-funded, provincially-funded and territorially-funded continuing care services and will initiate steps in the short term to ensure this happens. It is recognized that new service delivery mechanisms will be developed in a manner that addresses jurisdictional issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

## ***Education***

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.

The Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations governments/organizations, has 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.

First Nations, working with Provinces and territories, 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 have committed 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.

### ***Economic Opportunities***

Economic opportunities encompass activities both within First Nations communities as well as First Nations 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, which are priority subjects under the *First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments*.

First Ministers and First Nation Leaders have agreed that early opportunities for action must be seized, such as economic infrastructure, training and skills development, connectivity, improving the regulatory environment, resource development, and business investment and development. Further, the Government of Canada and First Nations have agreed that they will develop in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, and the private sector, regional-based strategic frameworks to facilitate economic opportunities and partnerships, and report through the multilateral process.