



## ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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### **National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo Crown – First Nations Gathering Closing Remarks January 24, 2012**

- Today was an important day in advancing our call to “renew” the relationship between First Nations and Canada. I thank the Prime Minister and all of the Cabinet for being here with us throughout the day as well as the important Regional Roundtable yesterday ... these are critical opportunities to be heard and to begin the dialogue needed.
- This means getting back to the original relationship expressed in the gift of the Wampum Belt we presented at the start of the day: a relationship based on partnership, sharing and trust.
- Getting back to that relationship means getting away from the Indian Act. We have both identified the Indian Act as an obstacle. We are prepared to work with Canada on the basis of this new relationship to push beyond the Indian Act.
- It means we must support First Nations in creating their own laws and agreements that move them beyond and out of the Indian Act so they make the decisions that affect their own lives. This is already happening and we need to support all First Nations in doing this.
- What is clear today and is evident is that First Nations have the answers and the solutions. We must drive this process as full partners.
- We will arrive at a day where the Indian Act is simply obsolete, a relic of the past. And we can do it – the proof is that some First Nations are already there.
- Today was a first step but an important step.
- This kind of engagement – working together to find solutions – must become a normal part of how we do business together.
- Specific areas of work we’ve discussed today:
  - o Renewed relationship based on the royal proclamation requires tangible steps including reviewing the structure of financial arrangements to support sustainability for First Nations
  - o On education – the Government of Canada will work to implement agreed upon recommendations as quickly as practicable



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- o On economic development an important economic task force will be struck to make recommendations to unlock economic potential of FNs. This must include resource revenue sharing ensuring FNs have a fair share of benefits from resource development on their lands
- o Canada must work with First Nations to respect the spirit and intent of our Treaty relationship and advance approaches to Treaty implementation.
- o Canada and FNs agree to work to reform comprehensive claims policies to reflect recognition and affirmation of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Advancing certainty should be based on these principles as well as expeditious resolution and self-sufficiency
- o Canada and FNs agree to remove barriers to self-determination and support FN governance. The Indian Act cannot be replaced overnight but we look for Canada commits to work with FNs on the implications of the elimination of the Indian Act. In the meantime, through the use of existing tools and development of new mechanisms, both parties can create conditions to enable sustainable and successful FNs
- But our work does not end here. This is the beginning. We want to see a commitment from the government to continue to work together at the highest levels in partnership.
- As former National Chief Coon Come said: *The Crown is here and that is important. First Nations are here and have the solutions.*
- First Nations demonstrated that today: we have the answers. We are the prime movers in change and we must be full partners in this important work. We will settle for nothing less.