



MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES MÉTIS

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Métis Nation calls Aboriginal Affairs Working Group ‘solid step forward’

Toronto, ON -- Métis National Council (MNC) President Clément Chartier is calling the inaugural meeting of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group a solid step forward in advancing economic development in the Métis Nation. The AAWG meeting, held today in Toronto, ON, was the first in 4 years bringing together ministers and leaders from Provincial / Territorial, Federal and Aboriginal governments.

“The future well-being and prosperity of Métis Nation citizens is greatly tied to creating lasting economic development opportunities in Métis communities,” said President Chartier. “Cooperative efforts between Métis governments and the 5 western-most Provinces, like this working group, will help foster that economic development, benefiting not only the Métis people, but all of Canada.”

The Aboriginal Affairs Working Group was formed following the last Council of the Federation meeting with leaders of the National Aboriginal Organizations, held Aug. 6, 2009, in Regina, SK. The AAWG brings together First Nation, Métis and Inuit leaders with Provincial / Territorial Aboriginal Affairs ministers to discuss ways to improve the socio-economic conditions of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The Federal Government was also invited to participate in the AAWG process and was represented by the Hon. Chuck Strahl, Indian Affairs Minister and Federal Interlocutor for Métis.

The AAWG agreed to focus on 2 broad areas; education and economic development. Ministers and Aboriginal leaders also agreed health and well-being needed to be addressed to achieve concrete and tangible improvements in the lives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

“The Aboriginal Affairs Working Group is an acknowledgement that substantial multilateral cooperation is needed to improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples, but it is just a start,” said Chartier. “For this and other multilateral initiatives to be successful for Métis Nation citizens, appropriate and empowered Provincial / Territorial and Federal government representatives must engage in a Métis-specific process.”

President Chartier said such a Métis-specific, multilateral process is available through the Métis Nation Protocol. The September 2008 agreement between the Métis National Council and the Federal Government commits both parties to bilateral discussions on a host of issues concerning Métis people in Canada and allows for a multilateral process which includes the 5 western-most provinces.

Utilizing the Métis Nation Protocol multilateral process, Minister Strahl invited the 5 western-most provinces to the Métis Nation Economic Development Roundtable. The Roundtable will bring together Ministers, Métis leaders, industry and government officials to discuss Métis economic development. Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, on behalf of the 5 western-most provinces, accepted the invitation in a September 9, 2009 letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

“The commitment from Minister Strahl and the 5 western-most premiers to this roundtable should be an example for how multilateral discussions, like the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, can progress along a distinction based, Métis-specific process,” said Chartier.

The AAWG meeting concluded with a reiterated call for a First Ministers’ meeting on Aboriginal issues, as was made by premiers at the 2009 Council of the Federation meeting. It also committed to continue work at the officials’ level and will submit recommendations for the 2010 Council of the Federation meeting with National Aboriginal Leaders.

For more information contact Greg Taylor, MNC Communications, at (613) 296-9263 or gregt@metisnation.ca.

The MNC represents the Métis Nation in Canada at the national and international level. The Métis Nation’s homeland includes the 3 Prairie Provinces and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States. There are approximately 350,000 – 400,000 Métis Nation citizens in Canada, roughly a quarter of all Aboriginal peoples in the country.