

# Communiqué

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ACROSS CANADA

**Toronto, ON April 11, 2012:** Today, provincial and territorial Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Leaders from five National Aboriginal Organizations confirmed actions to be taken to address the unique challenges and opportunities of First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples\*.

Since 2009, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG) has provided national leadership and worked together on three priority areas:

- Closing the graduation gap;
- Closing the income gap; and
- Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

The Chair, which has been with Ontario for four years, will now move to Manitoba.

### Key activities and meeting highlights

#### Closing the Graduation Gap:

- Support continued call for a First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal education with national Aboriginal leaders;
- Support on-going initiatives within jurisdictions to increase graduation rates while recognizing federal funding responsibility; and,
- Develop a Joint Work Plan with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) on shared priorities.

#### Closing the Income Gap:

- Enhance the AAWG economic development success stories website ([www.aawgecdev.ca](http://www.aawgecdev.ca)); and,
- Explore possible regional linkages with activities set out in the [\*Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development\*](#).

#### Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls

- Support a National Aboriginal Women's Summit to be hosted by Manitoba in 2012; and,
- Explore options to develop strategies for:
  - Addressing violence against Aboriginal women in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial groups; and
  - Education and awareness about the violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls.

We continue to call on the federal government to join the AAWG as a partner in advancing the work in these priority areas.

\*The Government of Alberta is not a party to this communiqué.

The AAWG is composed of Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs from all provinces and territories and the national leaders from five Aboriginal organizations (Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Native Women's Association of Canada).

## **QUICK FACTS**

- Aboriginal youth are Canada's fastest growing potential workforce. Almost half (48%) of Aboriginal peoples - First Nation, Inuit and Métis - in Canada are less than 24 years old.
- While personal income remains lower for the Aboriginal population in Canada, it is growing at a faster rate than that for the non-Aboriginal population. The average personal income for Aboriginal people in Canada has increased by \$2,473, growing by approximately 12% from 2001 to 2006.
- High school drop out rates for First Nations youth living off-reserve, Métis and Inuit youth are 22.6%, more than two and a half times the rate of non-Aboriginal youth (8.5%).
- About 15% of Aboriginal women in Canada who had a spouse or common-law partner in the past five years reported being a victim of spousal violence, more than twice the proportion among non-Aboriginal women (6%). Missing and murdered Aboriginal women represent about 10% of female homicides in Canada, despite the fact that Aboriginal women make up only 3% of the total female population in Canada.

## **Learn More:**

Ministers and leaders acknowledge the importance of cooperation on Aboriginal Affairs

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## **Ministers and leaders acknowledge importance of cooperation on Aboriginal Affairs**

“To build a stronger Canada, we must build stronger Aboriginal communities. The federal government needs to work with provincial, territorial and Aboriginal leadership to further enhance the work of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. We urge them to join in these discussions, so that all Canadians can have the best future possible.”

**On behalf of all Provinces/Territories:**

**Ontario Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Kathleen Wynne – AAWG Chair**

"Every government across Canada must be fully engaged in order to address the pressing issues facing First Nations. The Aboriginal Affairs Working Group is important to ensure follow-up from the Council of the Federation, to identify specific targets and to achieve outcomes. We must act now to achieve results based on priorities set by our peoples. I continue to encourage each province and territory to work directly with First Nations in their regions to support First Nation driven solutions. Through nationally coordinated and facilitated effort we can and must support advancements being made to deliver excellence in education for all First Nation learners and to support progress toward ending violence against women and girls. Working together respectfully to support innovation that works for our peoples and communities will help us achieve the results we need today for a better future for all of us.”

**Assembly of First Nations, National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo**

“As president of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, I am pleased to be invited here by ITK to speak on behalf of Inuit in Canada. Inuit have collectively worked on a National Inuit Education Strategy, which supports the identified AAWG education goal to increase the number of Inuit graduates. Addressing the education issue will be critical to closing the income gap for Inuit. We encourage all jurisdictions in Canada to get squarely and energetically behind that Strategy. Pauktuutit, in collaboration with the other Inuit organizations, also invites all Canadians to support population-specific actions being taken to end violence against Inuit, First Nations, and Métis women and girls, and to tackle the problems underlining all forms of family violence.”

**Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Elisapee Sheutiapik, President Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada**

From its inception, the AAWG recognized the importance of a distinctions-based approach to the priorities and issues of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples. It also recognized the importance of engaging the federal government in order to effectively deal with these issues. The Métis National Council has been able to combine these approaches through its ongoing engagement of the federal government and the five westernmost provinces in a Métis-specific process directed toward the establishment of a Metis Economic Development Strategy by 2013. There have been significant achievements under that multilateral process. I believe to replicate its success in other areas such as education, the five westernmost Provinces and the federal government must again demonstrate the political will to join with the Métis Nation in a Métis-specific multilateral forum. Our work within the AAWG is directed toward this end.

**Métis National Council, President Clément Chartier,**

“The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples continues to support the work of the Aboriginal Affairs Working group; however, I would like to stress that, in order to address the quality of life for all Aboriginal Peoples’ Health, Education and Economic Development and financial resourcing, issues must be addressed in a meaningful manner at the federal and provincial levels. We need

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the provinces to form partnerships with off-reserve Aboriginal organizations throughout the country so that everyone can prosper from resource revenue sharing and resource benefits sharing.”

**Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, National Chief Betty Ann Lavallée**

“The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) remains committed to working with Provincial/Territorial governments and National Aboriginal Organizations to close the education and economic disparities between the Aboriginal population and other Canadians. NWAC is further committed to work collaboratively with the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG) to address the high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls from a regional and national perspective. I am confident that solutions to addressing and improving the status quo will be identified and implemented by working in unity and solidarity.”

**Native Women’s Association of Canada, President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell**