

**Remarks for Premier Rodney MacDonald**

**Treaty Days**

**Commonwealth Room, Westin Nova Scotia**

**Wednesday, October 1, 2008**

**1:30 P.M.**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Grand Chief Syliboy

Grand Council members

Chiefs

Councillors and Elders

Your Honour

Ministers

Members of the legislative assembly

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen. . . . .

Phila'si (jel-ah-si).

It is a true pleasure to be here with you today to mark Nova Scotia's annual Treaty Day celebrations.

Today we celebrate the key role treaties have played in the relationship between the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and the province.

This is a ceremony that recognizes the many contributions the Mi'kmaq have made to Nova Scotia over the centuries.

My government understands that strengthening our province's aboriginal communities helps us build a stronger, better Nova Scotia.

To that end, just last week in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia's 13 elected Mi'kmaq chiefs and the province's Executive Council made history by meeting for the first time ever.

It was a productive meeting that touched on many shared issues and opportunities.

So productive, that we have decided to make the meeting an annual event.

A meeting that will enhance our mutual respect and understanding.

By meeting regularly, we hope to build on the significant progress we have already made.

In 2002, a made-in-Nova Scotia process of consultation began with the signing of the Umbrella Agreement by the 13 chiefs and the provincial and federal governments.

A series of discussions followed and lead to the signing of an historic Framework Agreement.

The last year has seen many significant accomplishments.

No least among them was the agreement to promote economic development for the Debert Industrial Park.

The agreement ensures that archaeological studies are completed before any new development goes ahead.

It also sets aside land for a Mi'kmaq Cultural Centre.

The centre will be instrumental in protecting the known archaeological sites and in celebrating the rich Mi'kmaq culture.

We have now begun to discuss substantive matter related to Mi'kmaq treaty rights.

Working groups have begun tackling issues such as moose management, forestry and fisheries.

We have come a long way - but we still have more to do.

As a government, we will continue to work with the Mi'kmaq leadership to build a stronger relationship and meet the challenges of a rapidly growing younger generation.

Young people who want and need education and skills to find good jobs, right here in Nova Scotia. There was consensus when we met in Eskasoni to focus our efforts on ensuring

Mi'kmaq youth have the same opportunities as non aboriginal youth in our province.

Together, we are taking positive steps toward a better future for all our citizens.

I would like to congratulate each of you who will receive an award today and join with your communities and all Nova Scotians in commending you for your accomplishments.

Thank you.

Wela'lin (wi lah lin).

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