

Remarks

Judith Sullivan-Corney

Deputy Minister Office of Aboriginal Affairs

at

International First Nations Community Planning Conference and Investment Fair

Membertou Trade and Convention Centre

May 23-25, 2006

Good Morning.

(Acknowledge organizers, chiefs, elders and participants)

I'm pleased to be with you this morning to bring greetings from our Minister Michael Baker and the provincial government. As you may know, Minister Baker underwent surgery recently and is convalescing before starting his campaign for the June 13 provincial election.

He intended to be here today and sends greetings on behalf of the provincial government.

I'm pleased to be able to speak to you today at this first-ever International First Nations Community Planning Conference and Investment Fair.

Our Office of Aboriginal Affairs works closely with Mi'kmaq communities throughout the province and it is encouraging to participate in a conference which is intended to promote learning, innovation and partnerships related to First Nations community planning and economic development.

I think it is appropriate that the conference is being held here at Membertou which is leading the way in an innovative approach to economic development which is now a model for the rest of Canada.

Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq are among Canada's leaders in entrepreneurship, restorative justice, governance and accountability.

With this in mind, this conference provides First Nations, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, investors and other key economic players in the region an excellent networking opportunity.

It demonstrates that Atlantic First Nations are taking the initiative to form new economic partnerships and attracting investments that will benefit Aboriginal communities and the region as a whole.

At the office of Aboriginal Affairs we have been engaged with the Mi'kmaq and Canada in discussions on Treaty and rights issues since the signing of the Umbrella Agreement in 2002. Later this year we hope to sign a Framework Agreement which will start full negotiations.

We have a 400 year relationship we are working to improve through negotiations. As a starting point, it is important to understand we believe there is good will and common interest among Nova Scotians for peaceful and productive resolution of these issues.

These are significant steps which we all hope will lead to mutual understanding, respect and lasting relationships with a common interest of building the future of Nova Scotia.

Over recent years there has been a sea change in our relationship - we are making progress at many levels and on many difficult issues. At the core of this progress is the need for a positive, open and transparent working relationship.

One of the mechanisms we are using very successfully is the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum, which has as its mission building a foundation for prosperous and vibrant Mi'kmaw communities through partnership, commitment and respect.

This conference will no doubt add significantly to the work being done by the Forum through the outstanding lineup of speakers and workshops you have assembled for this first-ever event. I hope it is the first of many and I wish you all success as you make your visions for the future a reality.

Thanks you.