

**Draft Remarks  
Premier Rodney MacDonald  
Treaty Day 2007  
Monday, October 1, 2007 /1:30 p.m.  
Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel, 1919 Upper Water Street**

Pjila'si.

Thank you Grand Chief Sylliboy and Grand council members; chiefs, councillors and elders; your Honour; Minister MacIsaac; members of the legislative assembly; distinguished guests; and ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to welcome you here today to participate in Nova Scotia's annual Treaty Day celebrations.

It is also a distinct honour to welcome Roger Augustine, 'chief-of-staff' representing the Assembly of First Nations to our celebration this afternoon.

Today, we recognize that Nova Scotians are enhanced as a people, when together we celebrate our diversity and build on all we have in common with Nova Scotia's First people.

We are here to celebrate our treaty relationship and the significant influence that Mi'kmaq tradition has had on Nova Scotia.

My government believes that issues surrounding Aboriginal and Treaty rights are best addressed through negotiations.

As you know, Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq and Canada are in the midst of discussions regarding treaty and rights issues which we hope will strengthen our long-term relationship based on mutual respect and understanding.

In Nova Scotia, we have plenty of progress to celebrate.

This year marks some important developments towards our commitments under the Umbrella Agreement which established the Made-In-Nova Scotia process.

This process will ensure we reach our shared goal of building a strong Nova Scotia – culturally and economically.

In February we signed the Framework Agreement. This was a landmark accomplishment and historic in its significance.

In my view these negotiations also present the best opportunity for Nova Scotia to underscore the common interests that bind all Nova Scotians... and by signing the Framework Agreement we have made a commitment that puts us on what I believe is the right path.

This historic document will ensure that the spirit of goodwill and cooperation we have enjoyed thus far..will continue as we proceed.

This year, we also celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum.

The Forum is a tri-party vehicle established to address social and economic issues that require collaborative attention.

Significant achievements are being made through the Forum including collaborative efforts to address justice, health, economic, social and cultural issues. This is a process which involves more than 100 representatives from Mi'kmaq communities, the federal and provincial governments.

There are many positive examples which demonstrate the Forum's achievements.... ranging from the creation of a Mi'kmaq cultural tourism strategy to providing a web presence for all Mi'kmaq communities.

Here are a few others. The protection of the Bedford Barrens has remained an important focus for the Culture and Heritage working committee. This group hosted an elder's gathering at the Bedford Barrens site and also produced a short video documenting the information captured during the gathering.

The Sport and Recreation Committee working committee established the (*name of scholarship*) "Kji Keptin Alex Denny Memorial Sports and Education Scholarship Program" ...and awarded the scholarship to three deserving applicants for their outstanding achievements in both athletics and academics.

The Justice Committee is partnering with the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network, Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice to develop court translator curriculum.

These are only a few examples of how the Forum helps us successfully work together to address issues of common concern in a manner based on partnership, respect and commitment.

Through the Tripartite Forum and ongoing negotiations, we have an opportunity to build on our common learning and our shared interest in building a strong Nova Scotia - culturally and economically.

My government's Office of Aboriginal Affairs is working hard to improve awareness and understanding of Mi'kmaq history, culture and current affairs.

To date, two thousand and one hundred civil servants and others have received Aboriginal Perceptions Training. "Understanding" is the best path to improved relations between government and the people who access our services.

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs has also produced two videos. Wabanaki: People of the Dawn parts one and two provide thoughtful descriptions of the contributions made by First Nation people in Nova Scotia.

This Fall, every high school in Nova Scotia will receive a learning guide to accompany the People of the Dawn video series.

When more people understand the vital role Mi'kmaq culture and heritage have played in our shared history, the more they will rally behind the efforts of the Mi'kmaq.

All of our combined efforts take a huge commitment of time and energy... to reach our vision for the future.

The rewards of settling our differences are too great – and too near – for us to rest now.

Our future has never looked brighter – and this is what I envision:

A future.. Where the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia assume greater control over the issues affecting Mi'kmaq people and lands...

A future.. Where the Mi'kmaq decide how resources can be used in the best interests of Mi'kmaq people...

I see a culture that not only thrives but flourishes within self-reliant communities that maintain positive and prosperous relationships within Canada.

This future means much closer personal relationships that will inevitably lead to greater mutual understanding, respect and lasting relationships with a common interest in building the future of Nova Scotia.

In closing, I would like to congratulate each of you who will receive an award this

afternoon. Your communities and all Nova Scotians commend you for your accomplishments.

I hope you feel a sense of pride for your contributions. You have demonstrated leadership in each of your respective areas and serve as positive role models for all of us.

Thank you. Wela'lin