

Government  
of Alberta Alberta *February 24, 2010*

## Historic partnership to strengthen First Nation education in Alberta

The Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta have signed an historic memorandum of understanding (MOU) on education. The MOU provides a common vision for strengthening learning and educational success for First Nation learners.

The MOU was signed by the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Dave Hancock, Alberta Education Minister, Len Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Grand Chiefs Eddy Makokis, Confederation of Treaty 6 First Nations; Charles Weasel Head, Treaty 7 Management Corporation and Allan Adam, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta.

“We can only reach education goals through true partnership,” said Minister Strahl. “I am deeply encouraged by the announcement made here today. There are few things more important than education and I am looking for this MOU to be a first step in implementing positive changes in education on behalf of First Nation students in Alberta.”

Strengthening the education outcomes for Alberta’s First Nation students is a priority for all of the partners. This MOU will provide a framework for collaboration and will support a range of education-related issues including parental and community engagement, Treaty and cultural awareness, and on-going work on tuition and education service agreements.

“Every student in Alberta deserves to receive an excellent education, regardless of where she or he lives and regardless of her or his background,” said Minister Hancock. “This MOU is a significant step in fostering the supports, relationships, and resources needed to ensure that every student in this province has the equity of opportunity to succeed.”

The MOU provides a framework for change to guide restructuring First Nations education in Alberta. Key highlights of the MOU include the following:

- the establishment of an Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre which will, for the first time, create a centre of education expertise for all of the First Nations in the three Treaty organizations;
- a commitment to develop a long-term strategic plan for First Nation education in Alberta to improve First Nations student outcomes; and
- the creation of the Alberta First Nations Education Circle comprised of senior officials from all parties to oversee the implementation of the MOU.

“The MOU on First Nation Education marks a new beginning for all First Nation children in the

province. One key aspect of the MOU is the honoring of our culture and language and maintaining our identity to guide our children to success,” said Grand Chief Charles Weasel Head. “We recognize the importance of the partnership between the three governments to improve educational outcomes for the future of First Nations People in Alberta.”

“The signing of this historic document marks the beginning of a new relationship with all partners to move forward on First Nation education including all Treaty Six First Nation children, youth, parents and Elders,” said Grand Chief Eddy Makokis.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will support First Nations in establishing the *Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre* and is committed to supporting the development of work plans and strategies contemplated by the MOU. As part of the MOU, the province will provide assistance and expertise in areas such as data collection and management as well as curriculum and resource development.

"This MOU represents the spirit and intent of the Treaty relationship envisioned when our ancestors signed with the Queen," said Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Grand Chief Allan Adam.

Repeating the words of Keenooshayo, Chief Adam also said, "I hope this marks the beginning of a true Treaty partnership that, among other things, provides us the opportunity to ensure ever increasing knowledge for our children."

“Education is the foundation upon which the future success of First Nation children, youth and communities is built,” said Minister Webber. “This historic MOU will significantly advance our work with First Nations and federal partners on achieving our shared vision for First Nation education in Alberta.”

At the Gathering for Success symposium on Aboriginal economic development held in Banff at the end of June, 2009, Minister Strahl agreed to the development of this partnership proposed by Alberta and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta.

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