

New Ministers to Support the renewed Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

Ottawa, Ontario - August 28, 2017

The Government of Canada is committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We have worked to implement this vision along two interrelated tracks: closing the socioeconomic gap between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians, and making foundational changes to our laws, policies and operational practices based on the recognition of rights to advance self-determination and self-government.

We recognize that relationships built on colonial structures have contributed to the unacceptable socio-economic gap. While day-to-day realities in Indigenous communities must continue to be addressed directly, there must also be a path to systematic change.

Progress is already being made on both tracks, including:

- We have lifted the 2% funding cap and have made a historic investment of \$8.4 billion over five years towards building a better future for Indigenous Peoples in Budget 2016 (<http://www.budget.gc.ca/2016/docs/plan/ch3-en.html>) with an additional \$3.4 billion invested in Budget 2017 (<http://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-03-en.html>).
- Results so far include 135 projects underway to build and refurbish schools, 6,400 homes being built or renovated, and 29 long-term drinking water advisories eliminated.
- We have placed a moratorium on the own-source revenue policy so that self-governing nations can keep all the funds that they generate through economic development.
- We have signed the largest self-government agreement in Canada so that the Anishnabek Nation in Ontario can take control of its own education.
- Our government has also created new structures to give life to this relationship, including permanent bilateral meetings to make progress on shared priorities with National Indigenous Organizations and the rights holders they represent.
- We have created the Working Group of Ministers on the Review of Laws and Policies Related to Indigenous Peoples, chaired by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. The Working Group has publicly released the Principles (<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csjsjc/principles-principes.html>) that guide its vital work.

These structures are advancing important work, but existing colonial structures have not helped us work coherently on both tracks. We believe that we need to do more to be able to construct a relationship that has never before been achieved with success.

In particular, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) – which serves as a focal point in the government's relationship with Indigenous Peoples – is charged with implementing the *Indian Act*, a colonial, paternalistic law. INAC was also not designed or conceived of to support and partner

with Inuit and Métis peoples, based on their unique histories, circumstances and aspirations. To put it plainly, the level of the ambition of this government cannot be achieved through existing colonial structures.

Over twenty years ago, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples acknowledged that a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples would require new structures. It recommended that we dramatically improve the delivery of services while accelerating a move to self-government and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. One mechanism to achieve this was the dissolution of INAC and the creation of two new ministries to facilitate this work.

We agree with the Royal Commission that rights recognition must be an imperative, and that is why today we are announcing the dissolution of INAC.

In its place, we will be establishing two new departments: a Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and a Department of Indigenous Services. These changes are modelled on the recommendations of the Royal Commission and will be finalized in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.

The dedicated public servants at INAC work hard every day to help build a better country and improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples. This work will continue, but under new structures that will better position the Government of Canada for success.

What we are doing today is also a next step toward ending the *Indian Act*, but the pace of transition will also require the leadership of Indigenous communities themselves.

Today's announcement is an important step in building a true nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, and government-to-government relationship with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada.

This dissolution of INAC will be staged. Today, we are immediately creating two new Ministerial roles that will take on distinct, but complementary objectives within the existing legislated structures:

- The new Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs will guide the Government's forward-looking and transformative work to create a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples. A key part of the Minister's mandate will be to lead a consultation process to determine how best to replace INAC with the two new departments. The Minister will also be tasked with better whole-of-government coordination on our nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, and government-to-government relationships, to accelerate self-government and self-determination agreements based on new policies, laws and operational practices, and to develop a framework to advance a recognition of rights approach that will last well beyond this government.
- The new Minister of Indigenous Services will continue the important work of improving the quality of services delivered to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. This will include ensuring a consistent, high quality, and distinctions-based approach to the delivery of those services. A rigorous results and delivery approach will be adopted, focused on improving outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. Over time, one fundamental measure of success will be that appropriate programs and services will be increasingly delivered, not by the Government of Canada, but instead by Indigenous Peoples as they move to self-

government. At the conclusion of this consultation, services currently delivered to Indigenous Peoples by other departments shall be considered for transfer into the new department (e.g. health delivery).

The dissolution of INAC will require legislative amendments. In addition, formalization of Ministerial titles and responsibilities will be finalized following Royal Assent of proposed amendments to the *Salaries Act*, which is currently before Parliament.

Both Ministers will be members of the Working Group of Ministers on the Review of Laws and Policies Related to Indigenous Peoples, whose work and Principles will help guide and support the work of both Ministers. Mandate letters for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Indigenous Services will be released publicly in the weeks ahead.

As mentioned today in a personal message from the Prime Minister to INAC employees, we need to shed the administrative structures and legislation that were conceived in another time for a different kind of relationship. The moment is upon us to work with even more focus with Indigenous Peoples and our provincial and territorial partners toward making our national journey of reconciliation a reality.

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