

The Chair set three goals for the roundtable:

1. to create a learning circle to share ideas and experiences,
2. to contribute ideas to the development of Canada's relations within the Hemisphere, including Indigenous to Indigenous Peoples issues (i.e., squarely address what the issues are and attempt to chart a course toward the 2001 Quebec City Summit),
3. to build relationships and networks.

He suggested the agenda for the day to be free and encouraged an open discussion with government officials. A thematic report would be distributed following the roundtable to the policy makers at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, other Departments, participants and the public.

After roundtable introductions, National Chief Phil Fontaine made a brief presentation. He welcomed the participants on behalf of the First Nations and thanked them for their engagement. He saw the meeting as an important step to shift attention to Indigenous Peoples's issues and to examine how these issues fit into a larger Hemisphere context. He went on to say that while the participants came from different backgrounds, they shared some common objectives. *The first objective was to ensure that the interests and rights of Indigenous Peoples are protected and that Indigenous Peoples play a large role in this process. The second objective was to elevate Indigenous Peoples from the poverty and misery they face in their every day lives.* He countered the argument that the reserve system is key to poverty among Indigenous Peoples. Those living off reserves are often the most impoverished, he said. Instead, racism is one of the most significant factors contributing to the current state of affairs. Racism, on both sides, stands in the way forward.

Phil Fontaine stressed that issues pertaining to Indigenous Peoples are not domestic but extend across the Hemisphere. *Drawing attention to last year's gathering of tribal leaders from Canada and the United States in Vancouver, he said that "there is a great value in carrying out responsibilities in a unified way."* Focus of that meeting was trade, culture, development, and human rights. There are efforts underway to better cooperate with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) as well as other Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. Unified, the Indigenous Peoples will be in a better position to influence the Organisation of the American States (OAS). Indigenous Peoples and their issues must be integral to the process. Indigenous Peoples want to have a seat at the table. Their aim is to contribute to the discussion/process conducted exclusively until now by states. If issues of trade, human rights, and land ownership are not addressed within the Indigenous Peoples' framework, states's efforts will not be effective.

If countries want to be seen as fair, they are compelled to interact with Indigenous Peoples in a fair and just way. Mass poverty experienced by most Indigenous Peoples in Canada and abroad must be eradicated. There is no reason for Indigenous Peoples to be poor, since it is their land and resources that have been dispossessed or unfairly exploited. An equitable system that allows for sharing of land and resources has to be found. Phil Fontaine ended by expressing