

Partnership with Canada's Native Peoples

Native people in Canada are assuming greater control over their own affairs. Together with the federal government, the First Nations people are working on numerous issues to achieve their rightful place in the Canadian partnership.

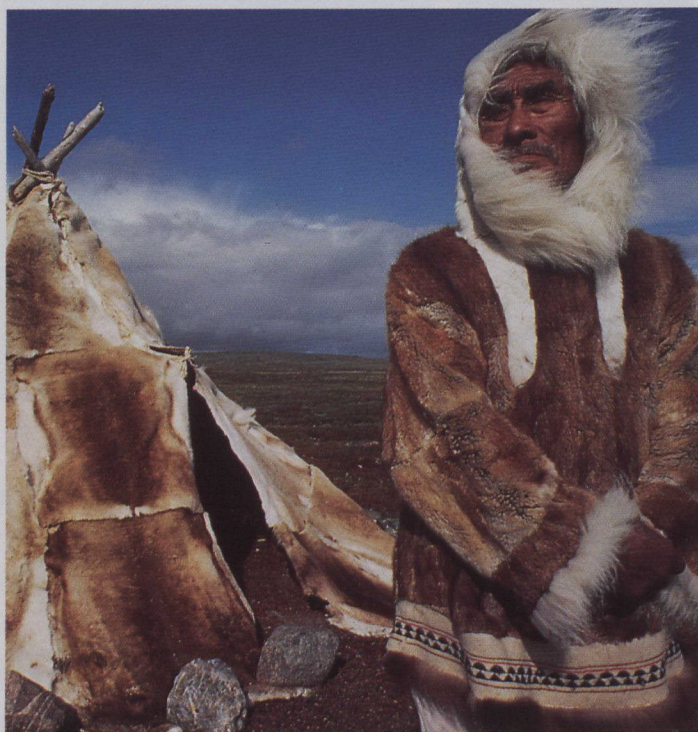
In September 1990, the Native Agenda was announced by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. This document is a clear statement of the government's commitment to improve the cultural, economic, legal and social prospects of Canada's First Citizens.

The goals set out in the Agenda arise from recommendations made by those who know the issues best — Indian leaders themselves. The fair and speedy settlement of land claims; the improvement of the economic and social conditions on reserves; the relationship between aboriginal peoples and governments; the place of aboriginal people in contemporary Canadian life — these are the crucial issues to which the federal government is directing its attention.

Native Peoples and the Canadian Constitution

In September 1991, the Canadian government put forth an extensive set of proposals on constitutional change. These proposals include aboriginal peoples as key players in the constitutional process that will determine the future of Canada. The document also states that the right of aboriginal peoples to self-government must be constitutionally recognized. These proposals are a tangible recognition of the importance of native concerns and the urgency with which they should be addressed.

Evidence of Canada's commitment to native concerns is reflected in recent developments. A Royal Commission has been set up to study the economic, social and cultural situation of aboriginal peoples.



The Commission is co-chaired by Georges Erasmus, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the major national Indian organization that represents the various Indian bands across Canada.

The Settlement of Land Claims

Progress has also been made in efforts to settle land claims. Some of these go back as far as the historical treaties made with the Crown at the turn of the century. Negotiations will

provide Indian bands with the land that was promised to them at that time. For example, a land entitlement agreement between the federal government and the provincial government of Saskatchewan will provide \$481 million to allow

can be negotiated at one time. As a result, the number of claims in various stages has increased from 6 to 26.

A \$355 million initiative on Specific Claims includes the creation of an independent Specific Claims Commission; a Joint Indian-Government Working Group; a fast-track process for settling claims of less than \$500 000 and the acceptance of claims relating to events that occurred before Confederation.

Improving the Quality of Life

The Prime Minister recently announced an increase of \$320 million for the Indian and Inuit post-secondary education support program. An important effort to improve social, educational and economic conditions of aboriginal peoples, this program provides millions of dollars to ensure a brighter future for aboriginal youth. The additional funding brings total spending to \$1.18 billion over the next five years.

In another area aimed at improving the quality of life for First Nations people, the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) is providing \$275 million to accelerate the provision of safe water and sewage services on reserves. In 1977, 53 per cent of dwellings on reserves had adequate water supply; that percentage had increased to 86 per cent by 1989-90.

The Canadian federal government has launched a major national environmental program called the Green Plan. Through the Plan, a new water treatment plant will be built on the

Self-government agreements under negotiation will further increase the control that native people have over their own lives.

27 Indian bands to buy land that was promised but never given to them.

A Task Force has paved the way for comprehensive land-claims negotiations between the British Columbia provincial government, the federal government and native people. The federal government has also removed the limit on how many comprehensive claims