

**1. Would you be willing to work with Nova Scotia First Nations to support a more collaborative, pro-active approach in dealing with the federal government?**

My government understands that strengthening our province's aboriginal communities helps us build a stronger, better Nova Scotia. To that end, just last Fall, in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia's 13 elected Mi'kmaq chiefs and the province's Executive Council made history by meeting for the first time ever.

A PC Government, through the leadership of our former Minister, the late Michael Baker, held an historic joint meeting in Eskasoni First Nation between government and the 13 chiefs where all agreed to meet annually. It was the first time provincial Cabinet has met with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs.

It was a productive meeting that touched on many shared issues and opportunities. So productive, that we have decided to make the meeting an annual event - a meeting that will enhance our mutual respect and understanding.

By meeting regularly, we hope to build on the significant progress we have already made.

The Tripartite Health Committee launched a project this year to hear about health priorities from the 13 First Nation communities in Nova Scotia. This work builds upon the 2005 Providing Health Care, Achieving Health report that identified health issues for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq: [www.tripartiteforum.com/data/PHCAH.pdf](http://www.tripartiteforum.com/data/PHCAH.pdf). This project is jointly funded by Health Canada (FNIH), The Mi'kmaq - Nova Scotia - Canada Tripartite Forum and the Province of Nova Scotia, with Membertou Band Office providing contract management for financial administration. A Steering Committee, representing Tripartite Health partners is providing functional guidance to Horizons Community Development Associates Incorporated ([www.horizonscda.ca](http://www.horizonscda.ca)), who is contracted for this work. Horizons worked closely with health directors in each community to identify and seek the participation of community members. The project aimed to consult with each First Nation community in Nova Scotia about the health issues reported in 2005, and identify their current health priorities through a series of community sessions. Twelve of thirteen communities participated in community sessions.

To encourage a broad range of perspectives, insights and opinions, two web surveys were also developed to capture information about progress, capacity and health priorities. One survey, directed at First Nations youth focuses specifically on the health priorities of youth and their communities. The second survey was circulated to a broad range of health system partners, including the Nova Scotia Departments of Health and Health Promotion and Protection, the Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs, District Health Authorities, First Nations Organizations, researchers, other Nova Scotia Tripartite committees and First Nations and Inuit Health representatives. The overall project goals include applying what is heard to improve health planning at community, district and departmental levels, and sharing the results broadly with Tripartite Forum committees, First Nations communities, First Nations organizations, and health system partners such as Health Canada, Nova Scotia Department of Health, Department of Health Promotion and Protection, District Health Authorities and Community Health Boards. Indeed, one of our priorities is to work in collaboration with the Mi'kmaq in advancing issues of common interest to the Federal government.

**2. APC's Aboriginal Economy Building Strategy is key to the success of First Nations communities in Nova Scotia. If elected, would you be willing to meet with leaders in our community to identify opportunities for economic partnerships?**

Yes. This is something our government has been actively doing. In fact, as mentioned in our platform, we were pleased to sign with the Mi'kmaq First Nations of Cape Breton and government partners a new aboriginal procurement strategy for the Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens cleanup to ensure aboriginal involvement for the rest of the project.

We also worked together on an agreement to promote economic development for the Debert Industrial Park. The agreement ensures that archaeological studies are completed before any new development goes ahead. It also sets aside land for a Mi'kmaq Cultural Centre. The centre will be instrumental in protecting the known archaeological sites and in celebrating the rich Mi'kmaq culture.

We have worked to connect more aboriginal and Mi'kmaq Nova Scotians with employers and career opportunities.

**3. Are you willing to work with First Nations leaders in Nova Scotia to continue to support the Tripartite Forum and the KMK negotiation efforts and outcomes?**

The Tripartite Forum is a unique model in Canada for co-operation in social and economic issues. A PC Government will continue to show strong support for this forum.

The Made-in-Nova Scotia Process is the forum for the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia and Canada to resolve issues related to Mi'kmaq treaty rights, Aboriginal rights, including Aboriginal title, and Mi'kmaq governance. The participants are the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia as represented by the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, the provincial government and the federal government.

The Process began with the signing of the Umbrella Agreement in June 2002, in which the Parties confirmed their intention to begin a negotiation process to address these issues. On February 23, 2007, the Parties signed the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Framework Agreement, which outlines procedures that will guide the negotiations and the topics to be covered.

The Framework Agreement states that the objectives of the Process are to create stable and respectful relationships and to reconcile the respective interests of the Parties through a Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia Accord that sets out the manner in which the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia will exercise constitutionally protected rights respecting land, resources and governance, to the extent the issues are dealt with in the Accord.

The three Parties meet monthly at the Main Table. In addition, the Parties may establish working groups to examine certain issues in more detail and make recommendations back to the Main Table.

A PC Government would continue to enhance and promote the great strides we have made within the Framework Agreement. As mentioned in our platform ([www.pcparty.ns.ca](http://www.pcparty.ns.ca)), we committed to: "Continue to work with Mi'kmaq leadership to build a stronger relationship."

**4. Would you be willing to improve health care services to our communities by working with First Nations leaders and your federal counterparts to develop meaningful delivery of services and innovative solutions?**

As noted in the Fall 2008 update of the Tripartite Forum, the Tripartite Health Committee launched a project to hear about health priorities from the 13 First Nation communities in Nova Scotia. This work builds upon the 2005 Providing Health Care, Achieving Health report that identified health issues for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq: [www.tripartiteforum.com/data/PHCAH.pdf](http://www.tripartiteforum.com/data/PHCAH.pdf). This project is jointly funded by Health Canada (FNIH), The Mi'kmaq - Nova Scotia - Canada Tripartite Forum and the Province of Nova Scotia, with Membertou Band Office providing contract management for financial administration. A Steering Committee, representing Tripartite Health partners is providing functional guidance to Horizons Community Development Associates Incorporated ([www.horizonscda.ca](http://www.horizonscda.ca)), who is contracted for this work.

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We have made commitments with which we will follow through including, in our 2008 Continuing Care Strategy, we said we would work with the federal government to expand home care services will ensure that residents on First Nations reserves have equitable access to the homecare nursing program.

A PC Government, through its health departments and through its role on the Tripartite Health Committee will continue to follow through on the information already received to develop positive solutions to the health issues identified to assist with needed care.

**5. Would you be willing to work with Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other government department officials to develop strategies to ensure that our people have access to better training and job opportunities?**

Yes. As a government, we have been and would continue to do so. For example, as noted in our platform, we have worked to connect more aboriginal and Mi'kmaq Nova Scotians with employers and career opportunities. We would continue to do so.

As I committed to during a speech last fall, we will continue to work with the Mi'kmaq leadership to build a stronger relationship and meet the challenges of a rapidly growing younger generation. Young people who want and need education and skills to find good jobs, right here in Nova Scotia. There was consensus when we met in Eskasoni to focus our efforts on ensuring Mi'kmaq youth have the same opportunities as non-aboriginal youth in our province.

Economic prosperity also includes enhancements to the education system. In Fall 2008, we were so pleased to sign an historic agreement with the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey to improve educational opportunities for Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaw students - replacing existing tuition agreements between Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey's 10-member bands and school boards, with a common tuition agreement between the organization and the province.

As Chief Robinson, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, said, "This is an innovative education agreement between two governments that focuses on improving performance and accountability, co-operation, and increasing respect for language and culture."

**6. Would you be willing to continue to support long term gaming agreements and other agreements with First Nations to support stronger economically sustainable First Nations communities and citizens?**

Our government, through the Aboriginal Affairs Department and a great deal of work by the late Hon. Michael Baker, have worked with reserves on gaming agreements. We will support those efforts.

As noted above, we continue to work to support sustainable economic growth with our First Nations communities and its people.

Other steps forward have included:

- Hired a full-time victim services officer of Aboriginal descent and fluent in the Mi'kmaq language for the new Victim Services Office in Eskasoni First Nation, Cape Breton.
- Completed a provincial review of service delivery to the Mi'kmaw community - resulting in the set up of the Mi'kmaq Liaison Office and director. Hiring a co-ordinator to help implement review recommendations.
- Proud to make a million dollar, two-year commitment to DRUM! - a . We are so proud that this phenomenal performance will be taken to British Columbia to be part of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver.