

Canadian Centre  
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Development



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125 Sussex Dr. Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

**REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE:  
CANADA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE HEMISPHERE**

CCFPD

March 22-23, 2000 (Winnipeg)

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**March 22-23, 2000  
Winnipeg**

*On March 23, 2000, leaders and representatives of Indigenous Peoples from Canada, the United States, Guatemala, Panama, and Mexico, business leaders, government officials, and others met to reflect on Indigenous Peoples' issues in the Hemisphere. Organised by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the roundtable was part of a series aimed at contributing public views to the development of Canada's foreign policy. The participants included, Assembly of First Nations, National Chief Phil Fontaine, Marc Lortie, the Prime Minister's personal representative for the Summit of Americas, Frank O'Dea, Madison Grant, and Chief Lydia Hwitsum, Cowichan First Nation. A discussion paper, prepared by Paul Chartrand for the roundtable, is attached.*

## **1. Framing the Discussion**

The day began with a Mayan ceremony conducted by Consuelo Cutzal from the Coordinating Council of Organisations of the Mayan Peoples of Guatemala. As a part of that ceremony, candles were lit and burned until the close of the roundtable. Following the ceremonial opening, David Chartrand, the President of the Manitoba Metis Federation, extended a warm welcome to everyone. He drew attention to the role of the Metis People in founding Manitoba and questioned the commitment of the Canadian government to the Metis as well as other Indigenous Peoples in the Hemisphere. Indigenous Peoples from across the continent continue to face similar challenges, including dislocation and despair.

Steve Lee, the Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD) and the Chair, thanked the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) for helping to organise the roundtable, Paul Chartrand for his discussion paper, and all the guests for coming to Winnipeg. He said that the mandate of the CCFPD is to help Canadians contribute to the development of Canada's foreign policy and to identify policy development needs, options and ideas. He drew attention to work related to Indigenous Peoples' issues the CCFPD has done in the past, including the National Forum on APEC (April-October, 1997) and the National Forum on Circumpolar Relations (May-June, 1998) and a roundtable on "Indigenous Peoples' Art and the Idea of Canada" (March 12, 2000, Vancouver).

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 his hope that young Indigenous Peoples will be able to see the world in a brighter way than their predecessors. The first steps toward this goals have already been taken.

Marc Lortie, the Prime Ministers's personal representative for the Summit of Americas, outlined Canada's interests in the Hemisphere and brought participants up to date with planning for the upcoming OAS General Assembly meeting in Windsor (June 4, 2000) and the Quebec City Summit (April, 2000). During the 1998 Santiago Summit, Prime Minister Chretien signalled that Canada is ready to play its role in the Americas. A changing context allowed Canada to join the OAS ten years ago. Most Latin American countries have embarked on political and economic reforms aimed at developing democratic systems and free markets. The end of the Cold War and increased efforts to strengthen the European Union contributed to the shift in focus of Canadian foreign policy from Europe to the Americas. The time is right to develop networks and links with our neighbours to the South.

The Windsor OAS General Assembly meeting and the Quebec City Summit are good opportunities to promote Canada's vision. The OAS is re-orienting to become a more people-focussed body. It addresses range of issues including democratisation, social needs, as well as trade and investment. The Canadian agenda for the Quebec City Summit is still being shaped and the government is open to ideas and suggestions.

Attention should be paid to three key areas, which came out of the Santiago Summit. They are:

1. Strengthening democracy. How can Canada help to embed democratic values? How have democracies improved in the region since the last Summit?
2. Economic integration. How does the Hemisphere collectively stand on developing/moving forward the Free Trade Area of the Americas? How to integrate the human/social dimension into trade and investment negotiations and deals?
3. Social dimension. Has access to social services, including health and education improved for all? How has the reform of the justice system progressed? Have human (and other) rights been strengthened? How can Canada play a useful role?

Marc Lortie encouraged reflection on these issues. He said that Canada could perhaps offer its experience with community building. He was receptive to practical and concrete suggestions from the roundtable participants and reiterated the opportunity Canada has to play a leadership role in the Americas.

Before the discussion began, Paul Chartrand outlined his paper. He extended his appreciation for creating a forum which includes Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, government officials and especially the business community. He commented on the significance of the Red River region as the homeland of several Indigenous Peoples and a place key in the development of Canada.

*Domestic law and policies reinforce the marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, he said.* Ever since their land and resources have been dispossessed, Indigenous Peoples have been living on the margins of the Canadian economy. Indigenous Peoples issues have often been an afterthought, an addition to decisions already made. Canadian law has consistently ignored the interests of Indigenous Peoples and, in some cases, has prevented them from taking full advantage of their talents and resources. They have been considered as people without a voice and history.

Today, governments have become more sensitive to human rights. Other changes have also occurred, including the expansion of free markets. As a result, businesses have become increasingly influential. It remains critical to Canadians and the Canadian government how money and corporate power is used. Canada should be the champion of mutually beneficial trade. "The most significant contribution that Canada can make to the security and development of Indigenous Peoples is to manage Canadian investments in a way that ensures a positive net impact on the indigenous communities which host Canadian resource companies." There has been some indication that the private sector is increasingly aware of the need to recognise Indigenous Peoples rights.

First steps toward developing a Canadian policy on Indigenous Peoples in the Americas should make clear commitments to:

1. The speedy ratification of ILO Convention No.169.
2. The adoption of a screening mechanism governing DFAIT's participation in the promotion of Canadian investments abroad.
3. The establishment of an effective regional monitoring system and annual Parliamentary reports through collaboration with Indigenous People's network.
4. A serious investment in educational partnerships involving indigenous organisations and institutions in Canada and Latin America.

These thresh-hold measures should gradually be reinforced by appropriate legislation to strengthen corporate overseas accountability under law, Paul Chartrand said. Participation of Indigenous Peoples in devising policies that affect them is fundamental.

## **2. Synopsis of the Discussion**

Phil Fontaine, emphasised the point made by Paul Chartrand that historical texts, including encyclopaedia, treat Indigenous Peoples in a vague way as if they were a nameless and faceless mass. As a result Canadians are not fully exposed to the history of Canada and many have no knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Peoples. This poses challenges for building relationships and, in extension, for doing business. Representatives of Indigenous Peoples from the United States expressed their support for Phil Fontaine's efforts to develop better links among the Indigenous Peoples of the Hemisphere. They also expressed their appreciation for the invitation to participate.

The business link between investment and economic development does not square with the Indigenous Peoples' concerns about their environment (i.e., natural environment, culture, way of life, etc.). A "way of life" is an end in itself and must come before calculating investment results. While Indigenous Peoples are not afraid of investment, there must be clear guarantees that history is not repeated. The environment Indigenous Peoples occupy should not be destroyed and that they should not become marginalised and impoverished as a result of outside investment. *The Indigenous community must have the right to refuse access to its land and resources. Structural mechanisms have to be found to prevent entry in such cases.*

Many Indigenous Peoples' representatives echoed this argument, among them Chief Lydia Hwitsum. She emphasised the cultural/values disconnect between the corporate world and Indigenous Peoples. Particularly, she addressed the close ties of Indigenous Peoples to their territory and the distant, profit-motivated approach to land by business. *Companies have to realise that there are real, legitimate costs associated with their entry for Indigenous Peoples, she said.* These costs include a smaller/altered space for future Indigenous generations to flourish, for instance. However, this is not to say that all investment is bad. A capacity for Indigenous Peoples to participate in mutually beneficial business ventures is one way to ensure investment is not exploitative. Indigenous Peoples do not have to be displaced for the (national) economy to grow.

Maxine Wiber, Vice-President of Environment, Rio Algom, said that companies are themselves learning about corporate social responsibility. There should be a recognition on the part of companies that Indigenous communities have the right to say "no," she said.

*There exists a disequilibrium between economic freedom and economic rights in favour of the former. Therefore, corporations should be screened before entering Indigenous territory and Indigenous economic rights conscientiously protected.* Given the unequal starting place in developing countries, it is the elites that benefit most. Benefits rarely trickle down to the underprivileged. In this sense, Mexican President Zedillo's Davos speech, accusing northern anti-liberalisation NGOs of saving the developing world from development, is elitist.

*A larger forum with more Corporate interests should be convened. Government officials and businesses should develop links with Indigenous Peoples and develop practical models of co-operation.*

Glenn Sigurdson, CSE Group, said that sustainable engagement around a table is a fundamental challenge. *Therefore, safe fora should be developed where actors would be able to express their self-interests/"opportunities" openly.* New approaches and models could be found at the intersection of Corporate self-interests (i.e., profit, certainty, time) and Indigenous Peoples' interests (i.e., tradition, maintenance of environment, "balanced" growth). Too much attention has been paid to outcomes instead of building relationships and ways in which the two seemingly disparate communities could meet, he said.

Allan Torbitt, AFN, encouraged the participants to take a longer term vision. While the OAS GA in Windsor and the Quebec City Summit present a good opportunity to announce/promote practical projects and initiatives, work on instilling a new mind set and developing new processes will continue beyond these two events. Wayne Lord, Aboriginal and Circumpolar Affairs Division, DFAIT, said that we should make sure to take advantage of the fact that leaders often set the tone for the future at the Summit. Quebec City provides a good opportunity to signal that Indigenous Peoples' issues are in the mainstream of public domestic and international policy.

*In order to establish a presence/platform for Indigenous Peoples at the OAS, the Inter-American Indigenous Institute should be reformed and revitalised. Allan Torbitt said that while it would be very useful to have such an exclusive window, Indigenous Peoples' issues should not be treated separately from other OAS issues, including poverty alleviation, access to education, and other "baskets." It should be clear that helping the millions of dispossessed and marginalised Indigenous Peoples in the Hemisphere to lift themselves from misery will contribute to the overall peace, security, and development of the region.*

*Daniel Sanchez Nestor, Guerrero Council of the 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance (Mexico), took Allan Torbitt's argument further and said that there could be no democracy without respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their right to land and self-determination. Canada should lead by example and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights. The Canadian government should develop implementation, enforcement, and punitive mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of the relevant laws. Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the democratic process underlined by an effective legal framework would undoubtedly contribute to stability. Stability is in everybody's interest. The "value added" in showing/influencing by example is significant.*

*Consuelo Cutzal, Coordinating Council of Organisations of the Mayan Peoples of Guatemala, said that in some cases, the political structures actually perpetuate and reinforce marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America. Violence may have dramatically diminished in the recent past, but there is no inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemalan "democracy," for example. Economically marginalised and politically circumscribed, Indigenous People in many Latin American countries have little chance to develop. Forces for change from across the Hemisphere have to be united and pressure on recalcitrant governments extended.*

Hector Almendrades, Centre for Trade Policy and Law (Carleton University), said that governments of Latin America seem to listen more to their foreign counterparts than to the Indigenous Peoples living on territories they supposedly "govern." Moreover, only a very limited number of resolutions adopted by Latin American governments are fully (or at all) implemented. *Therefore, international bodies such as WTO, the UN, and the OAS should set up units addressing Indigenous Peoples's issues on a continuous and consistent basis. Such units could act as engines/enforcement mechanisms for the implementation of adopted resolutions, among other things.*

Kelly McBride, Office of Secretary-General OAS, pointed out that the institutional constraints of the OAS may seriously limit what can Canada do to help Indigenous Peoples in the Hemisphere. Since the OAS operates on consensus, cutting edge issues including corporate social responsibility, may be hard to push. Human rights are observed hesitantly in some new and still fragile Latin American democracies. *Perhaps, the most Canada could achieve is to foster dialogue between states and Indigenous Peoples. Canada could elevate the discussion/discourse and push for stronger language on Indigenous Peoples' issues at the OAS.*

William Young, Canadian International Development Agency, said that while Paul Chartrand's paper indicated that Development Assistance does not have as much bearing in Latin America as private business, it remains vital. Historically CIDA has not directly supported Indigenous Peoples of the Hemisphere because it was politically impossible to programme such projects. Indigenous Peoples issues have been addressed through general poverty reduction and equity enhancing programmes. However, the changing context has opened the window of opportunity. On March 22, National Chief Phil Fontaine met with Minister Minna and other CIDA officials and agreed to collaborate in targeting CIDA's programming towards Indigenous Peoples' needs.

The importance of history and education/learning was stressed by many participants. *Indigenous Peoples will not forget their history in order to focus on the future, as governments and others constantly urge them to do.* Developing a common vision and mutually beneficial policies may take a long time, but the process of building trust and relationships must start now. Dialogue and the necessity to be listened to and heard were underlined. Indigenous Peoples face the same problems across the Hemisphere at different levels. Linkages among them are important. Collective pressure may prove effective in ensuring Hemisphere Indigenous Peoples' rights. Development assistance projects should be sustainable. Foreign government pressure is sometimes much more effective than monetary contributions, which often end up in government coffers.

In conclusion, Marc Lortie expressed his commitment to build bridges. He encouraged National Chief, Phil Fontaine, to convene more meetings of Indigenous Peoples' leaders to feed into the agenda-building process for the Quebec City Summit. Ideas expressed during this roundtable would be useful to the government of Canada and the Prime Minister himself, he said. On corporate social responsibilities, he also argued that the behavior of Canadian corporations abroad is fundamentally proper and codes of conduct based on standards they are respecting in Canada. However, in the eventuality that corporations do not behave properly he encouraged activism on the part of Indigenous Peoples to counter any harmful corporate action. John Clarke reminded participants that social corporate responsibility is one of Minister Axworthy's priorities. Steve Lee, Chair, thanked all for their contributions. The roundtable was closed by a ceremony performed by an elder from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.





**AGENDA**  
**CANADA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE HEMISPHERE ROUNDTABLE**  
**March 22-23, 2000**  
**Winnipeg**  
**9 am to 5:30 pm**  
**Ft. Garry Hotel, 222 Broadway**  
**Club Room**

**March 22**

7 pm - 8:30 pm Evening Reception  
Fort Garry Hotel

**March 23**

9 am - 9:30 am Coffee  
Club Room

9:30 am - 10 am Roundtable  
Club Room

Welcome to Winnipeg

David Chartrand, President, Manitoba Metis Federation

Welcome to the Roundtable and Introduction of Participants

Steve Lee, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy  
Development

10 am - 10:30 am Opening Remarks  
National Chief Phil Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations

10:30 am **The Organization of American States, Quebec City Summit of the  
Americas and Canada's Interests in the Hemisphere**

10:30 am - 10:50 am Opening Remarks  
Marc Lortie, the Prime Minister's personal representative for  
the Summit of Americas

10:50 am - 11 am Comments

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 11 am - 12 pm     | Discussion   |
| 12 pm - 1:00 pm   | Lunch<br>Laverendrye Room  |
| 1:30 pm           | <b>Canada and the Indigenous Peoples of the Western Hemisphere:<br/>Putting Principles into Action in Trade and Investment</b> |
| 1:30 pm - 1:50 pm | Opening Remarks<br>Paul Chartrand, Discussion Paper Author and former member of<br>the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples  |
| 1:50 pm - 2 pm    | Comments   |
| 2 pm - 3 pm       | Discussion (Coffee available.)   |
| 3 pm              | <b>Indigenous Peoples and the Hemispheric Agenda</b>   |
| 3 pm - 3:20 pm    | Opening Remarks  |
| 3:20 pm - 3:30 pm | Comments<br>Chief Lydia Hwitsum, Director, International Centre for Human<br>Rights and Democratic Development                 |
| 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm | Discussion   |
| 4:30 pm           | Closing Observations   |
| 5 pm              | Closing Remarks<br>Steve Lee, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy<br>Development                            |

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## List of Participants

### **CANADA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE HEMISPHERE ROUNDTABLE**

**March 22-23, 2000**

**Winnipeg**

**9 am to 5:30 pm**

**Ft. Garry Hotel, 222 Broadway  
Club Room**

Paula Acoose  
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

Ray Ahenakew  
Meadow Lake Tribal Council/Contigo International

Hector Almendrades, Adviser  
Centre for Trade Policy and Law,

Roger Augustine, Board Member  
Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources

Chief Myrtle Bush  
Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

David Chartrand  
President, Manitoba Metis Federation

Paul Chartrand  
Discussion Paper Author

National Chief Phil Fontaine  
Assembly of First Nations

Chief Lydia Hwitsum  
Director  
International Centre for Human Rights and  
Democratic Development

Steve Lee, Executive Director  
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Marc Lortie  
The Prime Minister's personal representative for  
the Summit of Americas

President Gerald Morin  
Metis National Council

Frank O'Dea  
Madison Grant

Merrell-Anne Phare, Director  
Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources

Glenn Sigurdson  
The CSE Group

Eric Steedman  
Social Investment Forum

Allan Torbitt  
International & Intergovernmental Affairs Advisor  
Assembly of First Nations

Maxine Wiber, Vice-President Environment  
Rio Algom

Rick Zerbe Cornelsen  
Aboriginal Neighbors Program Coordinator  
Mennonite Central Committee

**Government Observers**

John Clarke, Minister Axworthy's office

Jeff Marder, Mexico and Inter-American Relations,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and International  
Trade

Wayne Lord, Aboriginal and Circumpolar Affairs,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and International  
Trade

Laurent Charette, Aboriginal and Circumpolar  
Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and  
International Trade

Brennan Patrick, Aboriginal and Circumpolar  
Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and  
International Trade

Marilyn Whitaker, Director  
International Relations, Indian and Northern Affairs

**International Observers**

Jesus Alemanca Martinez, Executive Secretary  
Institute for Development of the Kuna Yala / Kuna  
General Congress (Panama)

Consuelo Cutzal  
COPMAGUA - Coordinating Council of  
Organizations of the Mayan Peoples of Guatemala  
(Guatemala)

Caroline Gelinias  
Indigenous Peoples and Community Development  
Unit, Inter-American Development Bank

Edward Hale  
Association of Three Affiliated Tribes

James Peter Hale  
Association of Three Affiliated Tribes (North  
Dakota, USA)

Kelly McBride, Senior Advisor  
Office of Secretary-General OAS

Daniel Sanchez Nestor  
Guerrero Council of the 500 Years of Indigenous  
Resistance (Mexico)

Armstrong Wiggins  
Indian Law Resource Centre (USA)

**Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development**

Marketa Geislerova  
Rapporteur

Dawn McLean  
Consultant

Peter Moore  
Organizer