

# Joint Gathering 2013

October 15 - 17, 2013

Marriott Vancouver Pinnacle Downtown, 1128 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

## Summary Report



First Nations Summit



Union of BC Indian Chiefs



BC Assembly of First Nations



Aboriginal Affairs and  
Northern Development Canada

Affaires autochtones et  
Développement du Nord Canada

Canada

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# Executive Summary

The *Joint Gathering 2013*, a meeting of BC First Nations and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) leadership, was held on October 15-17, 2013, in Vancouver, BC. The event was co-hosted by the BC First Nations Leadership Council (comprised of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs) and AANDC BC Region.

The *Joint Gathering 2013* provided an opportunity for BC First Nations' representatives and government officials to proactively engage and network together on issues of common interest.

The three-day event included a networking reception, three keynote addresses, five plenary panels, 12 dialogue sessions, and nine government service information tables. At the networking reception, a cultural welcome was given by the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, upon whose traditional territories the event was held.

The purpose of this Summary Report is to provide an overview of the objectives, structure, dialogue, and feedback from the *Joint Gathering 2013*. The report will also inform any post-Joint Gathering 2013 next steps.



The *Joint Gathering 2013* was developed by First Nations leaders and administrators, and government officials and leaders. AANDC BC Region provided funding to support event costs and travel and accommodation for two delegates from each First Nation in BC.

In total, representatives from 131 of the 203 First Nations in BC (66 per cent) were present over the course of the Gathering. There were 299 First Nations delegates, 13 Tribal Council members, and 21 observers who participated. Other attendees included federal and provincial government officials, dialogue session moderators, service information table representatives, and support personnel.

The event evaluation identified that 70 per cent of participants had their expectations met, and 82 per cent left with a better understanding of policies, legislation and initiatives that affected their community.

Overall, *Joint Gathering 2013* advanced the ongoing dialogue between BC First Nations, AANDC, and other government organizations.



# Evaluation Summary Highlights

Seventy-nine evaluation forms were received from the total 312 participants. The high attendance from First Nations communities and the constructive comments indicate that the Joint Gathering 2013 played a positive role in the ongoing dialogue between First Nations and government officials.

Both the plenaries and dialogue sessions were well attended and a key draw for First Nations participants. In particular, the Proposed First Nation Education Act, Quality of Life, and Lands and Resources plenaries were identified as the most important topics overall. In terms of the dialogue sessions, the Lands and Economic Development, the Children and Families, Comprehensive Community Planning and Mentorship, and Housing sessions were identified as the most important topics.

Evaluation form feedback from the participants on the event objectives indicated that:

- Overall, 70 per cent had their expectations met
- 56 per cent connected with government officials
- 82 per cent have a better understanding of policies, legislation and initiatives that affected their community
- 34 per cent believed that Government officials have a better understanding than before the Joint Gathering of the best practices, positions and concerns of First Nation communities
- 64 per cent engaged in meaningful dialogue during the plenary and dialogue session
- 52 per cent provided recommendations to government officials

Feedback also indicated that there was not enough time for discussion during the plenaries and dialogue sessions; participants wanted more time to share their experiences, ask questions and hear responses.

Participants also identified that they would like best practices and success stories from leaders and their communities on the following topics to be presented at the next Joint Gathering event:

- Housing
- Land use and land management
- Relationships with governments
- Shared territories
- Economic and social development



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

On October 15, 2013, the Honourable Steven Point, Order of British Columbia, invited participants to reflect on the groundwork of previous BC First Nations leaders, the unity and strength of leadership, and the need for new relationships with government.

On October 17, 2013, Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Reconciliation Canada, encouraged participants to combat societal racism and foster diversity in order to build on the success of BC Reconciliation Week. CBC-TV Correspondent Duncan McCue spoke to the positive shift in media coverage of First Nations issues, and observed that true reconciliation does not consist of merely forgetting the past.



## GOVERNMENT SERVICE INFORMATION TABLES

There were nine government service information tables at the event, hosted by:

- Canada Revenue Agency
- The Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP
- Employment and Social Development Canada, Labour Program
- Service Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat
- Statistics Canada
- Environment Canada
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada



# Plenary and Panels

The *Joint Gathering 2013* included five plenary sessions with panelists and presenters from First Nations and federal and provincial representatives, and various views on the topics were represented and discussed.



Summary of key points raised by panelists, presenters, and participants (grouped by common themes):

PANEL TOPIC	THEMES	WHAT WAS HEARD
Strong and Appropriate Governance	Self-determination	» First Nations' led solutions are being implemented. This includes the First Nations Land Management Regime, sectoral governance initiatives (e.g., health, education), and community bylaws
	Current Regulatory Framework	» Community engagement by First Nations leadership is an essential decision-making component » Work collectively to ensure legislative tools and processes are in place
	Strategic Elements to Support Governance	» First Nations require fair access to lands and resources » Transparency and accountability attract investors and support economic development » The Government of Canada must build a framework to support lasting reconciliation across all government departments; meaningful partnerships will support this endeavor » Reconciliation is a process; respect and recognition are required: how we get there remains to be determined

PANEL TOPIC	THEMES	WHAT WAS HEARD
Quality of Life	Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» First Nations should be involved with government to develop agreed-upon quality of life indicators</li> <li>» Interagency / intergovernmental collaboration is required</li> <li>» Track quality of life indicators over time to identify measures of success</li> </ul>
	Partnership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The Government of Canada should engage with First Nations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› prior to decision making</li> <li>› on a long-term strategy for partnership development</li> <li>› to reorient mandates/ processes to meet youth needs</li> <li>› to develop a more proactive partnership on education</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Employment and Social Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Address job training/ skills development, employment gaps</li> <li>» Consultation is required on funding formulas and program requirements; best practices/ language and culture should be incorporated into programs and curricula</li> <li>» Explore where/ how to devolve program authorities</li> <li>» Flexible and accountable programs are required</li> </ul>
The Proposed First Nation Education Act	Education Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» First Nation representatives expressed concerns with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› how the Education Blueprint/ proposed legislation would align with reconciliation</li> <li>› whether proposed legislation will reflect First Nation control of First Nation education</li> <li>› whether existing tripartite commitments (as exist under the Tripartite Education Framework Agreement) would be respected and protected</li> <li>› whether the legislation would include sufficient language and culture programming</li> <li>› whether there would be adequate funding under the proposed legislation</li> </ul> </li> <li>» Participants suggested that the BC First Nation model was working and did not require reform, but rather required secured, sustained and adequate needs-based funding</li> </ul>



PANEL TOPIC	THEMES	WHAT WAS HEARD
Lands & Resources	Overlaps/Shared Territory*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Lands and resources are required for participation in the modern economy</li> <li>» Many First Nations are finding success outside the Treaty process</li> </ul>
Shared Territory and Planning	*Both plenaries evolved into broad discussions on overlaps, their impact to the BC treaty negotiation process, and resource sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Participants were told that the Senior Oversight Committee on Comprehensive Claims was looking into shared territory and proper title holders issues</li> <li>» Many participants felt that the current overlap policy approach is unsustainable</li> <li>» The Duty to Consult continues to impact lands and resource development. It needs to be meaningfully incorporated into the Crown's decision making processes</li> <li>» Participants discussed First Nations' ability to organize in a way that promotes the advantages of broader, regional-based planning (including possible aggregation) to provide greater access to and participation in the economy</li> <li>» Collective work is required to address overlaps. Participants requested the support of the First Nations Leadership Council to host a forum and/or guide further discussions and outcomes to resolve overlap issues</li> <li>» The First Nation Summit proposed devoting time at their December 2013 meeting to further discuss this issue</li> </ul>



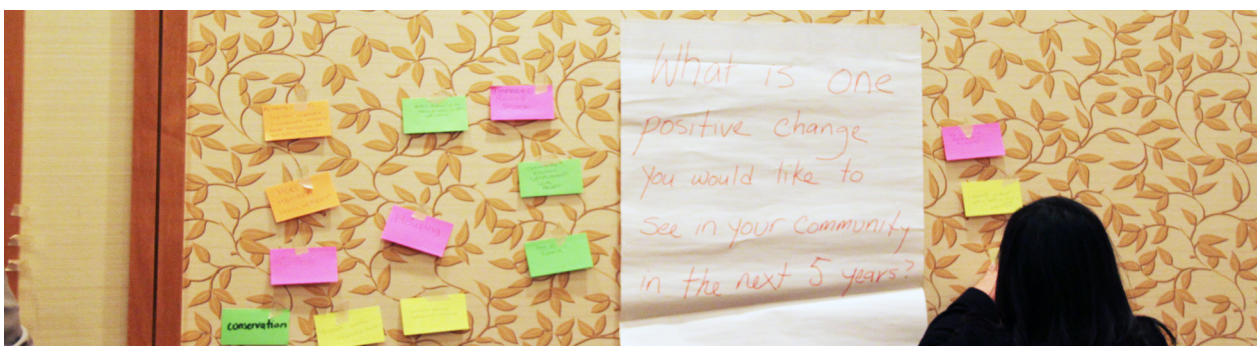
# Dialogue Sessions

While the 12 dialogue sessions were designed to encourage discussions and solicit comments and suggestions from participants, some provided an opportunity for government and First Nation presenters to share important information and answer participant questions.

Summary of key points raised by presenters, and participants:

DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
New Legislation	<p>Bill S-8: <i>The Safe Drinking Water Act</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Further collaboration is required to develop eight sets of regulations in the next five years (generally province-by-province)</li> <li>» AANDC HQ envisions two stages of regulatory development (2.5 years each); BC could be in the first group if interested</li> <li>» First Nations expressed concerns regarding the impacts of hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') on water quality</li> </ul>
	<p>Bill S-2: <i>Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The Province of BC will need to adopt its legislation to coordinate with federal legislation and First Nations</li> <li>» Advance planning may eliminate many inheritance issues</li> <li>» The Act can form part of First Nations' land codes under self-government or the First Nation Land Management regime</li> </ul>
	<p>Bill C-27: <i>First Nations Financial Transparency Act</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Issue of competitiveness for Band-owned businesses to disclose their financial information publically</li> <li>» AANDC clarified that the Act puts into place the same rules that apply to businesses owned by other Governments in Canada</li> <li>» Participants suggested the Act likely only applies to a select few, but implicitly broadbrushes all First Nations</li> <li>» First Nations have no concerns about being accountable to their members</li> </ul>
First Nations-led Economic Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Planning, getting organized and preparing will position First Nations to develop capacity to access the necessary capital to lead new initiatives, and to be proactive in taking advantage of abundant economic opportunities</li> </ul>

DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
The Urban Aboriginal Experience	» Efforts need to be made to increase accessibility to services, establish a method to collect contact information, ensure long-term funding, and consider how to bridge the gap between Aboriginal peoples in communities and urban settings
AANDC's Environmental Assessment Process	» First Nations expressed concerns over regulatory changes passed in an "omnibus" fashion, insufficient consultation over resource development projects, and the development of West Coast energy infrastructure
New Approach for First Nations' Housing	» First Nations expressed support for the concept of the AANDC New Approach for Housing Support, as it provides more flexibility to address gaps within the existing delivery model. A November 30, 2013, call letter is pending to support implementation in 2014-15
Children and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» First Nations suggested that federal and provincial policies/ processes are not working resulting in higher needs for care and less available funding</li> <li>» Child and Family Service agencies can include cultural awareness components and well-being sections in business plans</li> <li>» First Nations have concerns about the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach implementation and how prevention services will be delivered in communities</li> <li>» AANDC will send out the latest draft framework to Chiefs for comment</li> </ul>
Shelter Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» AANDC is available to discuss the First Nations Social Development Society's training practices</li> <li>» AANDC's policy is unchanged: the Interim Shelter Agreement is the appropriate solution to use prior to the development of the national policy; the UBCIC's Shelter Pilot Project could also be considered as a best practice</li> </ul>



DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
The Journey Toward Safe Drinking Water	» Participants raised issues related to programming for watershed protection to ensure safe drinking water, infrastructure operator excellence, and maintenance of and capital improvements for water systems that do not meet current standards
Treaty-Related Measures	» Participants discussed that TRMs have built capacity for treaty negotiations and are an effective tool for negotiation, proposed that multi-year proposals and funding be set up better, that issues regarding legal fees be clarified, that program tools be made more accessible, and capacity in program administration be increased to accommodate the increased volume of TRM proposals
Lands and Economic Development	» The importance of developing and implementing a plan for community and leadership was noted. The plans need to be inclusive of economic development, infrastructure and land use management (land designations, taxation, and option of gaining control over lands by implementing First Nations Land Management); and working together to build relations with municipalities, separate business from politics and share successes
Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP) and First Nation-to-First Nation Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» CCP requires community champions and full engagement to inform priorities and visioning</li> <li>» AANDC will continue to support/ expand the mentorship initiative into new areas (e.g., housing)</li> <li>» The CCP process is supported by leadership but should be driven by the community</li> </ul>
Annual Agreement Management Cycle, Simplified Funding Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improvements to the annual agreement cycle through: earlier provision of funding agreements/ amendments to recipients; offering longer term agreements to low-risk recipients; reduced reporting; and additional funding models.</li> <li>» More transparency for compliance audits suggested by recipients</li> </ul>





# Next Steps

AANDC BC Region and the First Nations Leadership Council will continue to monitor progress made on key issues raised at the Joint Gathering 2013 panel and dialogue sessions, and plan for future dialogue between themselves and other government organizations.

