

Joint Gathering 2014

October 22 - 24, 2014

The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver, BC

Summary Report



First Nations Summit



Union of BC Indian Chiefs



BC Assembly of First Nations

Canada

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Executive Summary

Joint Gathering 2014, held on October 22-24, 2014 in Vancouver, British Columbia, was the third annual gathering of BC First Nation Chiefs and Administrators with senior Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) officials. The event was co-hosted by the First Nations Leadership Council (comprising representatives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs) and AANDC.

The theme of this year's gathering was *Sharing Successes: First Nations share their experiences to promote partnerships and foster leadership for a sustainable future*. Content and structure was developed based on input received from Aboriginal leaders, government officials and *Joint Gathering 2013* evaluations. Over 70% of the 198 First Nation communities in British Columbia had at least one First Nation representative attend *Joint Gathering 2014*.

The three-day event included four plenary sessions (an introductory Chiefs' dialogue, and other plenaries on preparing for emerging opportunities, recognition of Aboriginal rights and title, and mentorship in the context of community development) and 12 dialogue sessions. Between sessions, participants were able to access information on government services at the information fair. A networking session was also held to celebrate cultural differences on the first evening.

New this year was the formal inclusion of the youth perspective on the Preparing for Emerging Opportunities plenary discussion and a real-time-response system that allowed participants to evaluate the sessions as they took place.

This year's evaluation results indicate that the Joint Gathering continues to play a positive role in the ongoing dialogue between First Nations and government officials. Over 89% of respondents support annual gatherings as an important venue for critical discussions on emerging issues and opportunities, and 92% said that they gained valuable insights at this gathering.

The purpose of this Summary Report is to:

- share participant evaluations;
- provide a concise summary of what was heard from the speakers, presenters, community leaders and participants; and
- outline next steps for the future.

This report will be shared with all First Nations in British Columbia and with AANDC senior government officials.



Evaluation Summary Highlights

Joint Gathering 2014 was attended by 318 First Nation delegates. Representation at Joint Gatherings from First Nation communities in British Columbia increased to 139 (70%) in 2014 from 104 (52%) in 2012. *Joint Gathering 2014* participants included 285 representatives from First Nation communities, 27 Aboriginal organization representatives, and six Tribal Council representatives.

Written evaluations (228) and responses to the 20 questions posed in the real-time audience response system (an average of 138 responders for each question) generally reflected participant satisfaction with being invited to attend a third annual gathering to engage with their peers and senior government officials.

Topics that were of most interest to participants at this gathering were identified as comprehensive land claims policy reform, recognition and reconciliation of Aboriginal rights and title, and investments in economic development. Participant feedback on the overall approach to the event included interest in more:

- opportunities to hear from First Nations' presenters, in particular the youth perspective;
- dialogue topics that allow for more focused, solution based discussions;
- time for sharing successes with each other and questions and answers during plenary;
- engagement with senior government officials; and
- First Nations' input in planning the event (see Next Steps below).



Speakers

The Joint Gathering proceedings opened with an acknowledgement of Coast Salish territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, a cultural welcome to Elders, Chiefs and other dignitaries, and an opening prayer offered by Elder Audrey Rivers from the Squamish Nation.

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, via video message, expressed his appreciation to the participants for gathering to share creative ideas, explore joint solutions, and collaborate to improve the well being of First Nations. He referenced the Government of Canada's current economic efforts and a more flexible approach to treaties. He closed by stating that he looks forward to hearing the results of the discussions at the Joint Gathering.

Speaker and author Thomas King was given a standing ovation following his interview by moderator Harold Tarbell for his perspective on the strength found in culture and action, and on his award-winning fiction *The Back of the Turtle*, 2014, and non-fiction, *The Inconvenient Indian: An Account of Native People in North America*, 2013.

To close the gathering, Dr. Evan Adams (then Deputy Provincial Health Officer, now Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority), spoke about his life journey, health from an indigenous perspective, and the need for reconciliation between First Nations and other Canadians.



Information Fair – Government Service Tables



The government service information tables that delegates were able to visit were hosted by:

- Western Economic Diversification
- Statistics Canada
- Public Works and Government Services
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Environment Canada
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Emergency Management
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Direct Deposit
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Communication Tools



Summary for Plenary Sessions

PLENARY SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Chiefs' Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations are working together to determine their economic development priorities and make progress on them » Regulatory reform and the acceleration of processes are needed to assist First Nations with development approvals » Consultation is necessary to reconcile, recognize and advance Aboriginal title and rights
Preparing for Emerging Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations await a federal response to the <i>Tsilhqot'in</i> decision and its implications » The Government of Canada and First Nations must build on partnership opportunities to advance economic and social development opportunities » First Nations want to be consulted regarding major project development and need to examine environmental and economic impacts of proposed large projects <p>Youth Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Government of Canada should advance partnerships with industry and institutions that connect Aboriginal youth with training opportunities in emerging areas of employment, using technology and social media that reaches youth » Include youth in First Nation–Government of Canada gatherings to contribute their perspective, build capacity and foster leadership development for succession planning





PLENARY SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Recognition and Reconciliation of Aboriginal Rights and Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Canada has not formally responded to the <i>Tsilhqot'in</i> decision, unlike the Province of British Columbia » First Nation panelists were concerned that a federal representative was not present on the panel to speak to this issue » <i>Tsilhqot'in</i> is viewed as a "game changing" decision on Aboriginal rights and title in British Columbia » The First Nations Leadership Council's four key points on recognition from its September 11, 2014 meeting with the British Columbia Premier were highlighted as the starting basis for a new relationship between Canada and all First Nations in British Columbia » Consent based decisions are required in traditional territories » The tweaking of the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy (as set out in Interim Policy) and the subsequent Eyford Engagement process on reform of the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy is not adequate to respond to the <i>Tsilhqot'in</i> decision » Participants called for high level government-to-government discussions with Canada
The Role of Mentorship in Achieving Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To be successful, both mentorship and comprehensive community planning must remain community driven and focused » The Government of Canada expressed its interest in expanding its First Nation-to-First Nation mentorship approach beyond community planning » First Nation communities may request mentor support for their community planning activities, and beyond into other subject areas

Summary for Dialogue Sessions

DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Investments in Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Aboriginal Financial Institutions Network works with other lenders to improve First Nations' access to capital and continues to improve business support services to Aboriginal entrepreneurs » Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada continues to work with First Nations to build awareness around available funding sources, innovative partnerships and ways to finance economic development
Employment Opportunities in Growing Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community involvement in training and employment opportunities identified and supported by industry will prepare First Nations for employment in the Liquefied Natural Gas industry and other growth sectors » Trades and early essential skills training for youth can start in high school and be delivered in the community » First Nations expressed concerns about inadequate industry support for apprenticeship programs » Aboriginal employment targets should be included in resource development contracts, and First Nations hope the Industry Training Authority can provide industry with regulatory oversight on meeting targets
Wealth Management and Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations are considering trusts as a financial structure to control and protect their major financial assets and to leverage funds » Trusts for First Nations present unique complexities and to be successful should reflect the community's objectives, be properly structured and prudently managed » First Nations want more information about options for wealth management beyond trust funds

DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Major Projects Management Office – West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations emphasized the importance of addressing rights and title and government-to-government relations, as well as the need for long term sustainable economic development » Issues and past experiences with resource development and capacity challenges to engage in the project approval process were shared » Cumulative impacts of major projects, including impacts from oil spills and impacts on the traditional way of life need to be addressed
Comprehensive Land Claims Policy Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Canada is reforming its comprehensive land claims policy and has appointed Douglas Eyford as the Minister's Special Representative to engage with First Nations, provinces and territories and other stakeholders to make recommendations to the Minister, and a public report will be released » The <i>Tsilhqot'in</i> decision has raised expectations with respect to recognition and implementation of pre-existing Aboriginal rights, improved treaty mandates, and Canada's obligations to consult and seek the consent of First Nations when impacting rights » Concerns were expressed that policy is not keeping up with evolving jurisprudence, and about inefficiencies in the comprehensive land claims process, including inflexible 'cookie cutter' mandates and the length of time required for Canada to make decisions » Loans were identified as a disincentive to concluding a treaty, and loan forgiveness was proposed by participants



DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Overview of Consultation and Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Government should consider international policy and case law on consent, and recognize that rights and title are held at a collective level not at a band level » Government departments and other entities need to be more consistent in their consultation processes with greater transparency between internal guidelines and the resulting decision-making processes » Inadequate funding and resources do not allow First Nations to participate in meaningful consultations on major projects, and this has cumulative effects on land and climate change and results in a loss of culture » Participants expressed that the Joint Gathering should not be considered as the formal engagement process with First Nations for updating the federal consultation guidelines
Overlapping Claims and Shared Territory Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations rely on collaboration with each other, innovation, resources and capacity building to bring about the resolution of overlapping claims and shared territory issues between communities » First Nations can prepare the foundation for the process of resolving overlapping claims and shared territories by developing guiding principles, rediscovering common interests and promoting innovation while resolving differences
Safe Drinking Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is inviting First Nations to participate and provide input into the development of regulations for safe drinking water » First Nation communities need additional funding to support capital upgrades and to engage in the regulatory development process
First Nation Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations need safe, affordable housing now and for future generations » In order to develop and implement effective measures of success for housing, First Nations need to explore networking opportunities and prioritize community and Council engagement
Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » New federal and provincial rules on <i>Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act</i> are now aligned to provide the same protections on and off reserve » Each First Nation can create their own law for family homes and matrimonial interests » The National Aboriginal Land Managers Association's Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property provides support to First Nations for the development of matrimonial real property laws



DIALOGUE SESSION	WHAT WAS HEARD
Sustainable Land Use Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There is a strong interest in learning more about the process of sustainable land use planning » Land use plans need to be funded » To facilitate the development of land use plans First Nations need to know how to access expertise
Healthy Communities and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Participants identified public safety, family violence and competing for limited resources as barriers to achieving healthy communities and families » Participants discussed shared solutions such as flexible funding, recreation programs and funding for violence prevention to support success in their communities » First Nations need flexible funding in order to design programs in ways they know will be most effective » Stable, long term funding is available to support healthy communities and families, including Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's Family Violence Prevention program, Public Service Canada's Crime Prevention program and Aboriginal Justice Services programs

Next Steps

A survey will be circulated to First Nations to inform the direction and discussion topics at the next Joint Gathering. Participants have clearly indicated their interest in greater First Nations' input to planning a future Joint Gathering and attending a gathering event every year.

Until the next Joint Gathering is held, the First Nations Leadership Council and AANDC BC Region will continue to monitor progress on key issues, and will collaborate on emerging opportunities and future actions to improve Aboriginal social well-being and economic prosperity and develop healthier and more self-sufficient communities.



