



National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo
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REMARKS - CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



*Chu, siyaaks A-in-Chut histukshil Ahuusath
Aatikshil sihl siihat hawilh hicksoo Chippewas, Oneida, Deleware, Machinaapsik maatik itsu*

Good morning and thank you for the kind welcome.

As I said in my language – I thanked the Indigenous peoples upon whose territory we gather – the Chippewa, the Oneida and the Delaware.

This is the basis of respect to the original and current inhabitants and to the ancestors – mine and yours – who gathered on the land, who made promises to one another and to all of us.

Promises to work together for our collective well-being.

I am very honoured to be here and to be asked to provide the Lafontaine-Baldwin lecture for 2013.

And may I say how very fitting it is at this time. A time of perhaps unprecedented engagement, awareness, challenge and opportunity for First Nations peoples and for all of Canada.

As you know, Lafontaine and Baldwin came together in the mid-1800s in the midst of chaos and rebellion and in so doing are now recognized as key architects for responsible government. Their work, approach and achievements are clearly helpful in an effort to understand the foundations of Canada.

Today, I intend to challenge us all to drive further to the origins of what is Canada and begin to think about identity and the requirements and interests of citizenship from an Indigenous perspective. In so doing, I believe we uncover powerful new ways to appreciate citizenship and to unleash success.

This requires us to go back further to the early 1600s – to the two-row wampum, to Treaties of Peace and Friendship, to 1763 and the Royal Proclamation issued by King George III and the Treaty of Niagara in 1764 and forward through relationships set in Treaty, agreements and understandings right across this country.

These agreements must not be viewed as antiquated relics of history. Yes, they are fundamental to understanding our collective past but they are increasingly important to understanding how we can achieve our potential as a society today and into the future. This is because the approach used by our mutual ancestors – yours and mine – to forge these agreements was



based on recognition, respect and mutual understanding. These are the principles that we must once again embrace and apply to clear a new path forward.

Understanding concepts of identity and citizenship in this land we now call Canada means we must strive to fulfill what was originally intended. This is central to the success of Canada today and in fact, quite possibly, it offers universal lessons the world over.

Let me begin with some sweeping historical references. It is one of the great tragedies of the teaching of history in this country that this history too often begins only with the arrival of Europeans, thereby denying all our students the rich, powerful and important chronicle of the Indigenous societies, governments and peoples of this land.

Given our limitations today – I'd like to encourage all of you to dig deeper than what we can cover here. Thankfully, there are tremendous new academic works from Indigenous scholars that are making a major contribution to our collective understanding and I am very pleased to say we are starting to see changes in the school system as well.

The very earliest interactions between Indigenous peoples and Europeans within the territories of what is now Canada were characterized, for the most part, by mutual interest and respect. Relationships established based on recognition and respect, through commercial and military alliance and Treaty, are the bedrock of the foundation upon which Canada is built.

In fact, prior to contact with Europeans, there were extensive trade networks and treaty-making practices among Indigenous nations. European traders who arrived in the northern part of North America had to learn and adopt these practices to establish a place for themselves and in many instances – to survive.

The two row wampum of 1613 remains one of the most vivid and important examples. This belt – now exactly 400 years old – records in expertly crafted, precious purple and white shells, the treaty between the Iroquois and the Dutch.

The belt depicts the wake of two vessels, a First Nations canoe and a European sailing ship, travelling together, side-by-side, yet on parallel paths uninhibited by the other.

It captures the commitment to an ongoing relationship of autonomous nations linked to one another by the principles of truth, respect and friendship. The two-row wampum belt symbolizes a strong, ethical relationship between two Nations and two peoples.



Some of the other earliest observations of European negotiators recorded and reported conclusions noting that (quote) *“there is no end to relations with the Indians”*, reflecting on the intrinsic tie of the peoples to their lands, and the solemnity and importance of agreements and relationships.

The earliest treaties from the east followed the path set in wampum – treaties of peace and friendship. Yet we must never overlook the reality that those concepts and the treaties included economic and strategic imperative.

This is perhaps best-stated by a representative of Six Nations to the governor of New York in the early 1700s when he succinctly summed up their interests by stating: (quote) *“trade and peace – we take to be one thing.”*

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 is, in part, a statement of the rights of Indigenous Nations, a statement no doubt hastened by several successful First Nation battles. The Royal Proclamation reflects on successful alliances and treaties of peace and friendship and affirms treaty-making as a requirement for development.

The Proclamation led directly to the Treaty of Fort Niagara in 1764, creating a new covenant chain between the British Crown and First Nations in the Great Lakes area.

The Treaty of Fort Niagara establishes a continuous relationship of peace, friendship and respect between the Indigenous Nations and the Crown. At Fort Niagara, British representatives read out the Royal Proclamation to the assembly of Indigenous Nations, wampum belts were presented and exchanged and over a two-month period Indigenous leaders made speeches and conducted ceremony affirming their understanding of the relationship.

This year – 400 years since the two-row wampum and the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation – is an important opportunity to remember the principles of peace, friendship and recognition central to our original engagement and our earliest political, military and economic agreements.

Of course – there is great variety and diversity across this land.



I am from Ahousaht, on the west side of Vancouver Island. Ahousaht is loosely translated as “*people living with our backs to the land and mountains along the open sea.*” As is evident – the way we view ourselves – our citizenship and identity is intrinsically tied to our territories.

My people are people of the sea. We have a rich and complex governing system and clear roles and responsibilities to our peoples, to our territories and to all Creation. We express our fundamental law of *Heshook-ish tsawalk* – everything is one – all is connected. And this world view is central to our dealings within our territories and with others.

The pattern of contact was different on the west coast and happened somewhat later, but again we see the emergence of similar principles and lessons. We must also remember that our early history was not without conflict.

In the late 1700s, Spanish, British, Russian and American ships began sailing the Northwest Coast. Our peoples generally welcomed the opportunity to expand our trading networks but were also absolutely clear about our jurisdictions, our rights and responsibilities. Acts of aggression by Europeans were met with a fierce response from our peoples.

In northern BC, the Tlingit fought against Russian occupation and successfully defended their people and territories. In Haida Gwaii and Vancouver Island, many European ships were attacked and destroyed in the assertion of Indigenous territory. Indeed, my own Nation captured and destroyed ships that were illegally harvesting in our territories, disregarding and disrespecting our laws.

Part of this history includes as well resistance, war and then devastating loss of life from imported diseases. Battles ensued on the coast and inland – where the Tsilhqot’in and others waged war to oppose road construction that was occurring without their participation.

This was happening at essentially the same time as mining expeditions were beginning along the north shore of Lake Superior back here in the East. Under the leadership of the Anishinaabe Chief Shingwaukonce – the Anishinabek stood in firm defense and demanded fairness ... in fact they demanded Treaty as they had seen further south and had known among their own Nations.

You see, at great moments of conflict, there are clear choices. In this country, where we established successful, sustainable relations – we have agreed to respect one another.



We agreed that we have mutual interests. We agreed to fairness, to sharing and to support one another.

These principles, codified in the Treaties and embedded as well in our ongoing relationship, are now the foundation and the basis of the relationship between First Nations and the Crown, now Canada. They bind us in a unique partnership secured when our ancestors agreed to peacefully co-exist in mutual respect and to share the lands and the wealth of our traditional territories.

First Nations and all Canadians share this history and we are connected as we embark on our collective future.

Put simply, there is no outsider. We are all involved, and we must all be engaged. The Treaties and other agreements are not only about our rights, they are also about our responsibilities.

Within the Indigenous world view, sharing is a central natural law that requires us to develop protocols of mutual understanding and respect to keep balance and harmony of the whole.

I can illustrate what I mean by using two recent examples that you may have heard about in the national media that demonstrate the relevance of this understanding today.

The first story broke while our people were gathered in Whitehorse for the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly. There was a flash fire of media reports about biomedical testing that was conducted by the government of Canada on children attending residential school. The revelation was not entirely shocking to many of us who grew up hearing the whispers of stories of the residential schools. But the reports had the effect of tearing open an old wound.

It is perhaps a perfect and terrible example of what happens when there is no respect or recognition of a peoples. Ripping apart families, apprehending children as they crawled under the bed or ran into the bush to try and save themselves, trying to forcibly imprint an alien language, culture and spirituality onto growing minds and bodies. This is nothing less than the prolonged abuse of the most vulnerable. And this abuse was not the exception. This was official, federal policy.

We all know the very tragic consequences of these actions – a legacy that continues to have a devastating effect on our Nations today.



The historic apology of 2008 was essential and now too is the time of truth and reconciliation. Acts of reconciliation create tremendous opportunity for all First Nations peoples and for all Canadians to join in the efforts of understanding we need to begin, again, building our shared future.

Fortunately, my second illustration from recent news tells just such a story.

We all saw the recent massive flooding in Alberta. Downtown Calgary captured most of the headlines, but a number of First Nation communities in Treaty 7 territory were also hit hard by the rising waters. I had the opportunity to travel to these communities three times during the crisis. It is really quite overwhelming to witness this kind of natural disaster in person.

I recall talking with families in Tsuu Tina, Morley and Siksika – people devastated by their losses and facing an uncertain future. Yet – what was most remarkable was seeing the incredible courage and kindness of a community coming together – hearing about people checking in on their friends and neighbours, making sure the Elders and children were cared for and safe ... the volunteers and the support that keeps the spirit strong.

Material possessions were swept away by the rising water but that spirit was never lost. And, it is this spirit that the Chiefs and their citizens harnessed to get the support they needed.

Far too often, situations like this have left people vulnerable and needy for far too long – lost in a tangled web of jurisdictional overlaps and uncertainties.

Not this time.

To their credit, the provincial government joined the First Nation leadership immediately – followed closely by the federal government. Within days of impact, we had Ministers and representatives from all governments directly engaging with the leadership to put the needs of the people first.

In this time of crisis, when everyone needs one another, the barriers and gaps that block action were overcome. This same lesson can apply more broadly to the work we need to do – the full agenda requires that everyone come together ... just as Treaty 7 pulled First Nations and their neighbours together to deal with the rising water.



One of the Treaty 7 Elders said at this meeting with Ministers: (quote) “This is Treaty – this is what is required that we do. We need to come together among our own Nations and with the governments to honour and respect our obligations in Treaty to support one another.”

We have inherent responsibility to our lands, our waters and our peoples and we have inherent rights as Nations to work in full respect with one another and as equal partners with other governments.

The medical experiments I mentioned earlier are really part of a larger, catastrophic continuum of socio-economic and policy experiments that have all failed our people. The *Indian Act* tried to displace (overnight) ways of life that had been in place for generations; it tried to wipe away the promises in Treaty that we would respect one another and share, that we would not impose one way of life over another. All of these experiments were utter and abject failures.

The experiments are all part of the unacceptable pattern that we must all work to break. The realities and statistics are stark and sobering. While Canada consistently ranks within the top five on the United Nations index, First Nations fall well below and struggle alongside countries in the developing world and third world. Our peoples are crammed into crumbling homes in collapsing communities. Almost half of our children live in poverty. Our children – and this is a fact – are more likely to end up in jail than to graduate from high school.

The reality of attempted denial, extinguishment and displacement makes it difficult to even feel part of Canada, part of the whole, today. I've experienced this reality directly as courts of law have attempted to say to my peoples, the Nuu chah nulth, that we do not exist. But we persist – and I may add – we succeed.

Just as the Nuu chah nulth finally concluded a 10-year legal battle for recognition of our fishing rights, we must find the way forward for all of us based on recognition and respect. We all have work to do. First Nations are becoming fully engaged in this effort by driving forward solutions from the ground up.

Working together, respecting one another and supporting one another will lift us all up. It makes economic sense. It makes political sense. And it makes moral sense, just as it did in the time of Treaty.

Mutual respect, recognition and partnership – this is how we can move forward together to break the pattern of unilateral, imposed approaches that are failing all of us.



All of Canada has a tremendous and shared stake in renewing and reconciling our relationship. Our ancestors did it. We can as well. In fact, we must do it. This is required to meet our mutual interests and to achieve mutual success. And this, I feel, is an economic imperative for the entire country.

Our people are the youngest and fastest growing population in the country. There is tremendous potential in our peoples and communities. We must invest in First Nation people through education, skills training and employment opportunities to ensure First Nations are full participants in the economy.

A study by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards found that if we raise First Nations educational and employment levels so they're equal with the rest of Canada, we'll add \$400 billion to the Canadian economy and save \$115 billion in the costs associated with First Nations poverty.

It's clear that our people are key to keeping Canada sustainable and strong. So are our lands. In the coming years, Canada is planning more than 500 major resource projects representing \$650 billion in new investments – almost all of which will be on or near First Nations lands and territories. For any of this to proceed, clear conditions must be met – first and foremost – the approaches must be sustainable and responsible and they must recognize our Indigenous rights, title and reality.

This means we must design new approaches that ensure recognition and an ongoing relationship for stewardship and decision-making that reflects the jurisdictions of all peoples.

Where these principles are in place, and where First Nations are engaged early on the basis of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, we can all share in the economic benefits.

The benefits of working with First Nations to give life to our rights and support our solutions is being recognized by more and more people and by a number of influential groups. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives reported in July 2012 on the opportunity among First Nations to develop a skilled and trained work force, which would in turn create economic spin-offs and capacity-building at the community level. The same report makes clear recommendations on the benefits of recognizing rights and effective and meaningful partnerships with First Nations. This echoes what First Nations have been saying for decades.



It takes us back to the early days of emerging economic and trade patterns – like the fisheries and the fur trade – and we see that, once again, our Nations are an important part of the economic life of this country, vital players and partners in keeping the country strong and competitive.

First Nations, and particularly our young people, have growing confidence, determination and conviction. We are experiencing resurgence through strengthened First Nation governments, nation building and rebuilding and the development of our own economies. First Nations are driving forward solutions enabling their citizens and youth to become actors for a civil, just society and agents for positive change in their communities and far beyond.

But we need not act alone in our efforts to fulfill our true potential as peoples, as partners, as Nations.

We all have a role to play in realizing this opportunity. No one of us here created the current malaise, no one of us here broke the promises of Treaty.

Yet still, we can all take responsibility for sparking change, for we are all Treaty peoples – we are all part of the Crown-First Nations relationships that were and remain central to Canada. We are all products of partnerships built on respect and recognition. We can all live the vision of our ancestors and act today for a better tomorrow.

Indeed, we have a lot of work to do. When I was young boy my father always told me – there are two ways to do things: the hard way, or the harder way. There is no easy path forward.

Our efforts require us to work together to find solutions. Achieving full engagement and forging understanding is the standard of how we can and must do business together.

Our guiding principle is the shared commitment for First Nations to be full participants in designing a collective future – for our communities and the country as a whole.

First Nations are doing our work and we extend our hand to you just as we did at the time of Treaty. We're reaching out to Parliamentarians and provincial and territorial leaders and officials. We're reaching out to the private and public sector. We're reaching out to the international community.



And we are reaching out to Canadians from all walks of life and all faiths to join us in this national project, this new national dream to create a more fair, just and stronger Canada.

And I am pleased and proud to say that more and more Canadians are standing with us every day. They are supporting our efforts to improve education, our economies, housing, health and community safety.

In my role as National Chief, I do not direct the priorities of First Nations. My job is to empower their voices and support and advocate for renewed nation-to-nation relationships.

My role is to support and advocate for respect and recognition of First Nations rights, title and the Treaties, to press for the transformative change required for First Nations to fulfill their true potential. My role requires that I act as a facilitator for direct discussion and dialogue between First Nations and governments as well as dialogue among First Nations and all Canadians.

Canada is built on a proud heritage of strong, vibrant Indigenous Nations and our historic and living relationships with one another. Together we can build strong communities where our peoples are full participants in driving our economies, educating our youth and fostering strong First Nations governments.

As I conclude, I want to bring us back to the great themes of the Lafontaine-Baldwin lectures. We must grasp the over-arching themes so we can focus on specific plans of actions, programs for change and tasks for each and every one of us.

I am reminded of the words of Prime Minister Trudeau when he left office in 1978. He acknowledged with some frustration and regret that (quote) “despite our attempts – the Indian problem is still with us.”

Thirty-five years later, after successive governments both Liberal and Conservative, it is time for a new language and a new story – a story that is not about ‘the Indian problem’ but of recognition and dialogue.

Harold Cardinal, a Cree scholar and contemporary of Pierre Trudeau, responded to the failed policy program in the late ‘60s with his important work entitled: ‘The Unjust Society’. He outlined thoughtful solutions organized around the theme of increased First Nation control of



First Nation affairs based on recognition – all of those components being key to citizenship and belonging.

These same themes emerged when the National Indian Brotherhood, the direct predecessor to the AFN, released the important policy statement: **Indian control of Indian education** in 1972 – another call to recognize our authority and responsibility to educate our own children in our languages and cultures and to nurture their success in today's world.

The massive five-volume Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples from 1996 recounts the same challenges and sets out the same solutions in clear, comprehensive terms. Yet still, we struggle to grab hold of these solutions or, worse, complain that we don't know what to do. We are making progress but we must dramatically increase the rate and pace of change. This to me compels new understanding and broader engagement – the engagement of all of us.

We can all agree that Canada needs a new story. Canada is more than two founding nations. Canada is more than a multi-cultural mosaic. Canada is more than a nation of immigrants. Canada is a country built on a proud heritage of strong, vibrant Indigenous Nations. And Canada is built on the fundamental foundation of partnership.

Canada's legal and political traditions are founded in pluralism and respect. Partnerships forged for both peace and prosperity.

This new story is connected to a very old one by the thread of collective history and memory. It is a story of proud Nations celebrating a strong voice of belonging and citizenship through their knowledge, languages, traditions and an abiding respect for the environment, trade, and alliances of governing systems that respect the rights of all.

Our new story erases once and for all the failed attempts at assimilation and the outrageous denial of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Our new story embraces the dream of our ancestors – yours and mine. The dream of the two row wampum – of canoes travelling side by side but never interfering in the other's path; the dreams of the original Treaties of peace and friendship; the dreams of the early explorers who imagined a society of partnership; and the dreams of Indigenous leaders who sought to protect their citizens, their territories and their way of life.



As citizens we are more than individuals; we are something far greater, more complex and precious.

We are connected – to one another, to our past and to our future.

We are called to be active participants in achieving our promise of respect, reconciliation and sharing; the promise of Treaty.

In my language – *Heshook-ish tsawalk* – we are all one. Recognition requires that we see one another, that we dialogue and understand one another with humility and respect.

Canada's *Constitution*, decisions of the Supreme Court and countless studies set the framework for our new story. I recall the words of my grandmother as we sat together witnessing the Statement of Apology in the House of Commons ... "Grandson," she said, "they are just beginning to see us."

Scholars the world over find that a refusal to grant recognition to Indigenous peoples provokes resentment and hostility, further alienating them from an identity as citizens of the larger state. We can be resolute in setting a different path, just as our ancestors did. A path where recognition of Indigenous rights becomes the very source of pride of citizenship and identity.

We take pride in Canada's great traditions of peace-making and serving peace. Peace is created through recognition – through living with humility in order to 'see' the other.

It is an approach needed between peoples, between nations and between mankind and the natural world.

Now it is up to all of us to do our part – to be active participants in writing **this story**. The inspirations to action are legion as I hope I have begun to illustrate for you today.

Let us recall again the words of Indigenous leaders entering into alliance:

"trade and peace – we take to be one thing."

And let me add ...

recognition and harmony – we take to be one thing;



prosperity and balance – we take to be one thing.

It is through understanding that we can learn to see one another, to recognize our shared interests and realize the conditions for peace and prosperity, collectively.

We have the ability, we have the energy, we have the ideas ... now is our time to be the authors of this new story and turn the page to a new tomorrow **TOGETHER**.

Kleco, Kleco!

