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## FIRST NATIONS & THE FUTURE OF CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations



It's good to be alive this morning. I carry the name, as I said in my language, A-in-chut, which my wife and I were hoping we'd be bestowed a name, I would be bestowed a name something like Eagle Flies Soars In The Blue Sky, but A-in-chut translates as "the people depend on you."

And as John [Ralston Saul] had offered up in his very generous introduction, I come from an old system of governance in my little village of Ahousaht which is a fishing village. If any of you know the west coast of Vancouver Island, that's where I come from. I was just there yesterday, day before yesterday. And you can't get any further west on this continent than Ahousaht. It's — as a child we would find little glass fishing balls that had floated over from Japan. So next stop Japan I always say when I think about home.

In my role as National Chief, I support, advocate for all 52 languages coast to coast to coast. The acknowledgement of my Metis and Inuit indigenous brothers and sisters, and also to [*speaking native language*] giving expression of appreciation for the ceremony this morning always is the way of our people. We reflect and respect that somebody else's laws are here, and the song has been sung, and the prayer has been offered, the elders have spoken. Now we can get on with our business, and that includes she who carries the great name from Treaty Seven Territories, she carries the name Grandmother of Many Nations, our former Governor General. That name, I'll speak a little bit more about it, but Her Excellency the Honourable Madame Clarkson, the role that she held. Our people, through the bloods, gave expression to our feeling about the Crown in bestowing that name on you.

And I want to thank you and John for the very kind invitation, along with Antony, and the organizers here at Stratford.

It is a tremendous honour. And I was speaking with Lee before she came on stage to do the ceremony - and let me begin with this sentiment - what she expressed to me, she said, "It feels like we're on the cusp." And so let me begin there, with that sentiment.

Being so thankful to be here. And I know that many of you will be enjoying Stratford's artistic brilliance and creativity. Inviting the LaFontaine-Baldwin Symposium to be a part of this Festival is something personally I feel deeply grateful for. Never could we imagine, if I were to hold a potlatch where a name would be bestowed or a marriage concluded or a rite of passage or even a funeral, without going to the artistic leadership. We would never call them anything less than because they're a part of the fabric of our systems of governance over the course of history. And so, too, shouldn't we consider the artists as leaders amongst us? So I think about the John Ralston Sauls when he's offering up important thoughts for the country through his writings. Or the artists we had a chance to sit down and spend some time with last night. Award-winning playwright, Tara Beagan. I don't know if Tara's here this morning. Oh, there you are. The way Tara described it, as an award-winning playwright, talking about those who had dug the trenches so that we, if I can say, as contemporaries, as the next generation, so that we can fight on in the trenches that were dug by the Thomas Kings, by the Mr. Graham Greenes, the renowned artists that have come from these lands, from our peoples, from indigenous peoples.

And in recognizing that we're in someone else's territories and having the ceremony we've just had, this really is the point of entry. Expressions 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, as John had alluded to. Promises to work together for our collective wellbeing.

And may I say how fitting it is at this moment, as Lee had said to me before we started, that we're on the cusp, because it feels like that. It feels like we've arrived at a moment perhaps of unprecedented engagement, awareness, challenge and opportunity for First Nations peoples and indeed for all of Canada. And as you know, and as was shared here already, LaFontaine and Baldwin came together in the mid-1800s in the midst of chaos, in the midst of rebellion. Wasn't described necessarily as using the word "conflict", but I know that Graham Greene, last night when we were talking, I think he used the term "string theory," right? This is the way my father speaks to me, as well. The way you were reminding us about the interconnected aspect of all life. And the essence of life being everywhere was what I received from what you had said.

And this notion of something being created out of chaos, out of, at that time, rebellion, and that this country, in fact, and the idea of this lecture series, John, from what I'm hearing, from what you were describing, very much being based on that, and the ideas of the Institute of Citizenship. I want to touch on a few of these ideas, talk about the kinds of philosophy that was introduced by Mr. Greene in your reflections with your fellow panelists at dinner last night, for those of us who were there.

So it feels like a very fitting moment. The last six months or the last 12 months are the few times that I've been able to get away with not shaving, for example. This is not my 5 o'clock shadow. It takes a west coaster a long time to get to this point.

And so today, behind the force of a little bit of facial growth, I want to take the opportunity to offer up a challenge, to respectfully and with great love reflect back. And as we do to our loved ones, confront one another periodically, when we have some things that are on our hearts and on our minds. I do believe that we can uncover powerful new ways to appreciate citizenship and to unleash success. It does require a bit of contextual framing, always to think about what was as a way to appreciate what is at this moment, as a way for us to then shape together, as Tara might do in her plays as she's writing, to script what might be. This is a moment to ask that we do this together. And it does require us to go back further to the earlier 1600s, to the Two-Row Wampum, to Treaties of peace and friendship, to 1763 and the royal proclamation by King George III. We know another little King George has just been born; I sent some Manitoba mukluks, under strict instruction by a strong Mohawk woman, I might add.

It requires us to go back to the Treaty of Niagara in 1764, and forward through relationships that have been set out in treaty. Very unique. Around the world, Canada's unique in this respect. Agreements and understandings right across this country. These agreements must not be viewed as antiquated relics of history, something just to be left. Yes, they are fundamental to understanding our collective past, but they're 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, on respect and mutual understanding. These are the principles that we must again embrace and apply to clear a new path forward. Understanding concepts of identity and citizenship in this land that we now call Canada means that 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.

And so we begin with some sweeping historical references. It is one of the great tragedies of the teachings of history in this country that this history too often begins only with the arrival of Europeans. So too I was taught. Thereby denying all of our students the rich, powerful and important chronicle of the indigenous societies, governments and peoples of this land. Given our limitations today, that's the first challenge: ***To encourage all of you, and Canada, those listening in, to dig deeper than what we can cover here today.***

Thankfully, there are tremendous new academic works from indigenous scholars making a major contribution to our collective understanding, and I'm very pleased to say that we're beginning to see changes in the school system as well, writings the likes of which John has authored, in *A Fair Country*. In our midst, we have one of the, if not the first, indigenous man appointed president of a chartered university in Canada, Mike Degonia, sitting over there. Please stand up and be acknowledged.

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 and 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 America had to learn and adopt these practices to establish a place for themselves, and many instances, to survive.

The Two-Row Wampum of 1613 remains one of the most vivid and important examples. The bell, now exactly 400 years old, records in expertly crafted precious purple and white shells the Treaty between the Iroquois and the Dutch. The bell 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 each other.

It captures the commitment to an ongoing relationship of autonomous nations linked to one another by the principles of truth, respect and friendship (inaudible) stuff, being friendly to one another. Two-Row Wampum 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, and I quote here, "There is no end to the relations with the Indians."

Yes, we sometimes pull that term out. For example, I am not the prime minister of Indians in Canada; I'll come back to that point later. Reflecting an intrinsic tie to the peoples, to their lands and to the 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 in 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 summed up their interests by stating, and I quote, "Trade in peace we take to be one thing."

The Royal Proclamation of 1763, in part a statement of the rights of indigenous nations, a statement no doubt hastened by several successful First Nations 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 the 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. You see, all the more important that Her Excellency would receive a name the likes of which she did, the Grandmother of Many Nations, from Treaty 7 territory. A very powerful link to the Crown that exists to this day.

Wampum bells were presented and exchange at that time. Over a two month period, Indigenous leaders made speeches, as we are wont to do periodically, and conducted ceremony affirming their understanding of the relationship. We come from oral societies, remember.

This year, 400 years since the Two-Row Wampum, in fact, October 7<sup>th</sup> marked the anniversary of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Proclamation. It's an important opportunity to remember the principles of peace, friendship and especially recognition being central to the original engagement of our earliest political, economic and yes, military agreements. And of course, as I've alluded to with the 52 languages, we are incredibly diverse. I coming from the village of Ahousaht, which roughly translates as "*people who come from the sea,*" back to the land, our backs are to the coastal mountain range and next stop, like I said, Japan. We're people of the ocean, and it's evident in the way that we describe ourselves as nations, and even the terms that we use, the language, as with any culture around the globe. Our citizenship, then, that notion of identity is intrinsically tied to our territories.

My people are people of the sea, and when I was five or six years old, this was made abundantly clear. I'd be off with my dried fish in this pocket and I had my fishing line in this pocket, and I was, as any kid, heading down to go fishing for the day. But the aunties would stop me. Always the aunties. Wagging their finger, "Did you go see your grandma today?"

"Oh, well, I'm going fishing. Oh, okay, I guess I better."

And they would then stop and make sure that I understood the necessity to sit with my grandmothers, with my great aunts, and to learn through the stories about our people, and about the responsibilities that we will inherit. And that was very early on in life. [*speaking native language*] It means "one", "oneness". We are all one and interconnected. Beginning to get to the roots of what I'm hearing are the underpinnings of the lecture series, and the very notion of this country and concepts like pluralism.

We are definitely a very rich and complex society. There's about 15,000 of us now. Growing rapidly. We're the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, but we are one of 52 different languages. There's 32 different languages just in British Columbia.

The pattern of contact was different where I come from on the west coast, and happened somewhat later, but again, we see the emergence of similar principles and lessons, remembering also that our early history was not without conflict. In the last 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, as my people especially are, about jurisdictions, about our rights and about our responsibilities. Acts of aggression by Europeans were met with a fierce response by our peoples, probably with facial hair like this.

In northern B.C. the Klingett 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. And as a child with a butter knife, I used to be out on the rocks adjacent to my village down the beach, and I used to find coins from the 1500s from Spain. An outsider would come visit and there'd be a horde of us kids trying to sell this guy our coin for 25 cents. I've since seen examples of these coins in the Caribbean, and I only knew the link when the dance, the King Fisher, would be sung and danced. One of our most famous songs and dances in my village, performed even during the time when the potlatches were outlawed because we were sneaky. Instead of having our cedar boards up we'd use as a screen on a stage made out of canvas so you could hide them really quickly, tuck them away and then just pretend that we weren't doing anything. And the Indian agents would come and they'd put our people to jail.

So that's my little snippet about a moment where I didn't really fully grasp, but got through our stories and our songs and our dances this notion of conflict which our people commemorate through our potlatch and through our songs and through our dances.

Part of this history includes this resistance. War. And then of course devastating loss of life from imported diseases. Battles ensued on the coast and inland to oppose road construction that was occurring without their participation.

This was happening at approximately the same time as mining expeditions were beginning along the north shore of Lake Superior; where I was just last week. Back here in the east, under the leadership of the famous Anishnawbe chief, who stood in firm defense, demanded fairness. They, in fact, demanded Treaty, as they had heard about and seen happening further south, and had known as well amongst our own nations.

You see, like was described at the outset, like this very country, in moments of conflict there are clear choices. In this country, where we establish 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 into our ongoing relationship, are now the foundation and 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 coexist in mutual respect and to share the lands and the wealth of the traditional territories. First Nations and all Canadians share this history and we're connected as we embark on this collective future. Put simply it means there is no outsider. **We are, each and every one of us, all involved. And we must all be engaged.**

The Treaties and other agreements are not only about rights; they are absolutely, also, about 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, to seek harmony of the whole. Not only between and amongst people, but I learned as a kid to go fishing didn't mean you use the prowess of being a fisher, but you sang the song to the fish [*singing*], because you have treaty with the fish, too. It has to agree to grab onto that which you put out in order for it to be brought in to become food.

(John was complaining about not being a good fisher so I just offered up a fishing tip. That one's for free.)

This notion of sharing, of having a basis of mutual understanding and respect - I'd like to offer up a couple of illustrations. Some of you may see in the media - for us it was a flash fire of media reports - about biomedical testing that was conducted by the Government of Canada on children attending residential school. Not a revelation that was entirely shocking to many of us who grew up hearing not just whispers, but real stories at our dinner tables from our parents and our aunts and our uncles and our grandparents. But the reports had the effect of really tearing open, and into old wounds. It's perhaps a perfect, as well as terrible, example of what happens when there is no respect or real recognition of 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, and as my father witnessed: five and six year olds having pins pricked into their tongue when they tried to speak the only language that they could when they arrived at these schools.

Really, it was children faced with trying to save themselves and their culture, and a people trying to save their culture and their spirituality. Nothing less than the prolonged abuse of the most vulnerable is what occurred. This abuse was not the exception: this was official federal policy.

We all know the tragic consequences of these actions; a legacy that continues to have a devastating effect on our nations today, and this is where the professional becomes personal. These are stories I heard at my dinner table. It being explained to me that some kids got vitamins and vitamin C and oranges and some kids didn't, and it wasn't understood why; we can't ask a seven or eight year old to understand that that was the case.

And it just turns out that Mike's former role was with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation; you get why I'm excited about the fact that he's now president of an important university in the country. It's that notion that education, learning and understanding, which is really the underlying theme of this reflection, I'd like to offer is so critical. And why looking back to understand what was is how we arrive at a better shared notion of what is right now, and then we can get on with shaping the future together.

The historic apology, then, of 2008 was absolutely essential and I was there. I was in the house when it was uttered. And so 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.

I can't help but be thankful for this being just such a moment, where voices are included that haven't perhaps been included in this manner. And this being a historic moment in the midst of an artistic festival, I think it really adds to it.

Fortunately, my second illustration tells this story of inclusion. We all saw the recent massive flooding in Alberta; I don't know if anyone was there. I was there! I was downtown Calgary and the waters were rising. It's, like, wow, and it was capturing the headlines. A number of First Nations communities in Treaty 7 territory were also hit hard by the rising waters. And I had the opportunity, as part of my role, to travel to these communities three times during the crisis. And it's really quite overwhelming to witness this kind of natural disaster in person, for sure, talking to the families devastated by their losses and facing very uncertain future. Yet, what was most remarkable was seeing the incredible courage and the kindness of a community come together; hearing about people checking in on one another, on their friends and on their neighbours, making sure the elders and the children, those most vulnerable were cared for and were safe. And the volunteerism! People flooding into the arenas at these Reserves I'm talking about, from all over, from the Reserve itself and from outside the community; people helping to keep each other's spirits strong at a time of crisis.

Material possessions, of course, being swept away by the rising water, but the spirit never lost. And it's this spirit that the chiefs and their citizens harnessed to get the support they needed in Treaty 7. Far too often situations like this have left people vulnerable and needy for far too long; lost because of the tangled web of the jurisdictional overlaps and uncertainties that we still have today. Not this time. This time was different.

To their credit, the provincial government joined the First Nations leadership immediately, followed closely by the federal government. Within days of impact, we had ministers and representatives from all governments, across many ministries, directly engaged with the leadership to put the needs of the people first. A time of crisis when everyone needs one another the barriers and the gaps that tend to block action were overcome, seemingly melted in front of all of our eyes.

The same lesson can absolutely apply more broadly to the work that we need to do now. 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. And one of the Treaty 7 elders said, when we were in the meeting with the various ministers and officials, "This is treaty," he said. He commented about what was actually happening. "This is what's required to 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."

You see, we have inherent responsibilities to our lands, our waters and our peoples, and we have inherent rights as nations to work in full respect with one another as equal partners, and other governments.

The medical experiments that I mentioned earlier are really part of a larger continuum of socioeconomic and policy experiments that have all failed our people. This includes the Indian Act, an attempt to really displace, overnight, the ways of life that have been in place for generations. Tried to wipe away the promises and treaty that we would respect one another, and share; that we would not impose one way of life over another. All of these experiments have been utter and abject failures. The experiments are all part of an unacceptable pattern that we must all work to break. The realities and stats are stark and they are absolutely sobering, Canada ranking within the top five in the U.N. human development index, while First Nations fall well below and struggle alongside countries in the developing and Third World.

I witness firsthand and some are beginning to appreciate with increased awareness in this country, our people are crammed into crumbling homes and collapsing communities. Almost half of our children live in poverty. Our children - and this is a fact - are right now statistically more likely to end up in jail than to graduate from high school.

The reality of attempted denial, of extinguishment and displacement makes it difficult to even feel part of Canada, part of the whole, today. I've experienced this reality myself as we fought and won a major fisheries case. The court / the judge brought the court to my village and I sat with my regalia in front of my people and my village, and a lawyer for the Crown said to me directly, "*We do not recognize that you exist as a peoples.*" Those words were uttered to me in a moment of deep and direct conflict. But make no mistake that Crown lawyer was speaking for Canadians, representing Canada in a case on fisheries in my little village off the west coast. But like the over 40 other court cases that I can point to, we won this court case.

[Applause]

And this is really about persistence and in this case succeeding, but it doesn't mean that when you win a court case against the federal government that the next day it's implemented the way you expected. This is where you come in.

Just as we have finally concluded this 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. This means 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 as well; it makes political sense; 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 this pattern of unilateral approaches that are absolutely failing not just us but the entire country.

**So this means that all of Canada has a tremendous and a 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 the economic imperative for the entire country as I said earlier. Our population, this makes me an old timer, are the youngest and fastest growing population: Over half under the age of 25. Tremendous potential in our peoples and our communities. We must invest in First Nations people through education, through skills training and employment opportunities to ensure that First Nations are full participants in the economy.

A study by the Centre for The Study of Living Standards found that if we raised First Nations educational and employment levels so they're equal with the rest of Canada, this will add \$400 billion to the Canadian economy and save \$115 billion in government expenditures. 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 that would represent \$650 billion in new investments, almost all which will be on or near First Nations land or territories. For any of this to proceed, clear conditions must first be met. The approaches must be sustainable and responsible, and they must respect and recognize our Treaty rights, our title and our reality.

This means, then, that we must design new approaches that ensure recognition and an ongoing relationship for stewardship and decision making that reflects the jurisdictions of all peoples. It means that principles which are in place enshrine the United Nations Declaration of Rights of indigenous peoples that include the right to free prior and informed consent are the basis upon which we engage early and often. Then 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 more and more in this country by influential groups like the Canadian Council of Chief Executives who reported in July of last year on the opportunity among First Nations to develop a skilled and trained workforce which would in turn create economic spinoffs and capacity building at the community level. The same report makes clear recommendations on the benefits of recognizing rights and effective meaningful partnerships with First Nations. It echoes what we as First Nations have been saying for decades. I should add, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce placing in the top ten the lists of barriers to competitiveness the need for skills training amongst the Indigenous peoples of this country as well.

This takes us back to the early days of emerging economic and trade patterns. I was thinking about the book by Hackett Fisher, *Champlain's Dream*, being another excellent example of recent writings that begin to capture the sentiment about the early days' economic and trade patterns, and fisheries, and in the fur trade. And we see that, once again, our nations are an important 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 a growing confidence, determination and conviction, and we're high-tech Indians. Social media. Some of the highest users per capita of the social media: Indigenous young people. Information moves as quick as lightening now about what's happening in Ottawa or maybe a lecture for some at Stratford. The information moves incredibly fast right now and this is very helpful to our people and to expanding the conversation and including many in this notion of the resurgence and strengthening of our people, the strengthening of First Nations governments, of nation building we refer to it, and rebuilding, and the development of our own economies.

First Nations are driving forward solutions, enabling their citizens and youth to become actors, actors for a civil and just society, and agents of 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 and as nations. We all have a role to play in realizing this opportunity, for, after all, no one of us in this room, no one of us in this country, created this current malaise. **None of us in this room break the promises of treaty, but still, and yet still, we can all take responsibility for sparking change.** For as has been famously said, and John himself makes this reference, **"We are all treaty people."** We're all part of the Crown's First Nations relationship that were and remain central to Canada. We're all a product of the partnerships built on respect and recognition, and we can live the vision of the ancestors and act today for a better tomorrow. Indeed, there is absolutely, and I see this all the time, an incredible amount of work to do.

I was reminded, my father, he went and got three degrees. He said his grandfather had caught three whales. I come from a whaling lineage, and his three whales were his three degrees. And the very first First Nations man from University of British Columbia to attain a PhD and he did that in his 50s. He's now 74.

It just reminds us that while we've come a long way and we have over 30,000 post-secondary graduates, that's a recent history that I'm talking about. We have our first university president sitting here. I just talked about a man who achieved our first PhD, and John often references the over 30,000 post-secondary educated Indigenous peoples across our lands.

And there's a lot of work to do. We have come some ways. And my dad reminded me when I was having trouble with math, I said, *"Dad, I don't understand this algebra. I can't do it!"* *"You can have what you say, son."* Oh! Drove me crazy! I said that I couldn't and what he was saying was the moment you believe it's possible you're making the choice to do the hard work. He would say, *"There's the hard way or the harder way, son."* And this is where we find ourselves at this juncture as well. It seems we've been avoiding the hard work for a long, long time, but not anymore. We're not going to allow this to punted down to future generations, and choose what's ultimately the harder path.

[Applause]

Our efforts absolutely require us to come 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; we're reaching out to the private and public sector; we're reaching out to the international community; and absolutely reaching out to our artistic leadership; we're 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, a just and a stronger Canada. And I'm pleased and proud to say that more and more Canadians are standing with us every day. They're supporting our efforts to improve education, our economies, housing, health and community safety.

In my role as National Chief, as I alluded to earlier, my role is not to direct First Nations; my job is to empower, to support their voices, advocate for a renewed nation-to-nation relationship; my role is to support and advocate for respect and recognition of First Nations rights, title and Treaties; to press for the transformative change that's required for First Nations to fulfill their true potential. My role, indeed, is that of a facilitator for direct discussion and dialogue between First Nations governments, the likes of which was an example for Treaty 7 during the time of the flooding.

Canada is built on a proud heritage of strong, vibrant indigenous nations, and our historic and living relationships with one another, and 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.

And as I move towards concluding, I want to bring us all back to the great themes of the LaFontaine-Baldwin lectures, that we must grasp the overarching themes so that we can focus on the specific plans of action, programs for change and tasks for each and every one of us.

I'm reminded of the words of Prime Minister Trudeau when he left office in 1978. He acknowledged with some frustration and regret, and I quote, "*Despite our attempts, the Indian problem is still with us.*" 35 years later, after successive governments, both liberal and conservative, **it's time for a new language and a new story, a story that's not about the "Indian problem" but of recognition and of dialogue.**

Harold Cardinal, a Cree scholar and contemporary of Pierre Trudeau, responded to the failed policy program of the late '60s with his important work entitled *The Unjust Society*. He outlined thoughtful solutions organized around the theme of increased First Nations control of First Nations affairs based on recognition. All of these components being key to citizenship and key to belonging. The same themes emerged when the National Indian Brotherhood, which is the direct predecessor of the Assembly of First Nations, released the important policy statement called *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 and comprehensive terms, and it was a report also borne out of crisis and conflict. You'll recall the time of the Oka Crisis, as it's often referenced as. Yet, we still struggle to grab hold of these solutions, or worse, complain that we don't know what to do. As I did say earlier, we are making progress, but we must dramatically increase the rate and pace of the change. This, to me, compels new understanding and broader engagement: The engagement of all of us.

**Canada needs a new story. Canada's more than two founding nations. Canada's more than a multicultural mosaic. Canada is more than a nation of immigrants. Canada is a country built on a proud heritage of strong, vibrant indigenous nations. Canada is built on the fundamental foundation of partnership. Canada's legal and political traditions are founded in pluralism and respectful partnership forged for both peace and prosperity.**

This new story is connected to a very old one by the thread of collective history and collective memory. It's 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 eclipses, overcomes for once and for all the failed attempts of assimilation and the outrageous denial of the rights of indigenous peoples. This new story, 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, never interfering with each other's path; the dreams of the original Treaties of peace and friendship; the dreams of the early explorers who imagined the society of partnership; 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're something far greater, something more complex and precious. We are connected [*speaking native language*] to one another, to our past and absolutely, if we choose, to our future. We are called to be active participants in achieving our promise of respect, reconciliation and sharing this as the promise of treaty. As I say in my language [*speaking native language*], we are all one. Recognition requires that we see one another, that we dialogue and understand one another with humility and with respect. Canada's constitution, the decisions of the Supreme Court and countless studies set the framework for our new story.

I recall fondly, having been in the House of Commons with my late grandmother. She was 87 at the time. Holding her hands as we sat and listened to the statement of apology, and she turned to me and she said, "*Grandson, 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 alienation of them from their identity as citizens with the larger state. We can be resolute if we choose in setting a better path, just as our ancestors did, a path where recognition of Indigenous rights become the very source of pride of citizenship, and identity. We take pride, rightfully so, in Canada's great traditions of peacemaking and serving peace. Peace is created through recognition, through living with humility in order to see the other. It's an approach needed between peoples. Indeed, between nations, between mankind and the natural world around us. Now it's up to all of us to do our part, to be active participants in writing this story. The inspirations to act are legion, as I hope that I have begun—just begun to illustrate for you today.

So let us recall again the words of Indigenous leaders entering into alliance. "*Trade and peace we take to be one thing.*" And so 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 interest and realize the conditions for peace and prosperity. Collectively, I feel strongly that we have in this moment the ability. We have, and our young people 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.**

Thank you so much.

[Applause]