



South Wind

"The official newspaper of the Manitoba Southern Chiefs' Organization, Inc."

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FIRST NATION WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES — A RESPECTED HONOUR

March 8th is recognized as International Women's Day, an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday.

In recognition of International Women's Day, we are proud to honour and acknowledge our First Nations Women Chiefs in Southern Manitoba.

As the life-givers of our Indigenous Nations, First Nations women are the back-bone of our communities, families and homes. We salute and honour all women on this year's International Women's Day!

"It was our grandmothers who held on to what they could of our identity as a People....Often times the fire would grow dim, but still our grandmothers persisted. We were taught that the time we are in is only borrowed from future generations. ...Our thoughts, words and actions impact seven generations from now. It is these children held sacred by our Mother Earth for who we must leave as true fire." — Anonymous —

Message from SCO Grand Chief Chris Henderson



Boozhoo! Aniin! Ho-Kota! Tansi! Greetings!

I want to take this opportunity to thank Manitonodin, the Spirit Wind Survivors Group, for inviting me to their meeting on February 27, 2007, in Dauphin, MB. to inform Indian Residential School survivors about the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

On March 8, 2007, the nine judges from across Canada will be meeting in Calgary, AB, to approve the settlement agreement by issuing Court Orders. This approval will be on the condition that former residential school students accept the agreement.

Beginning some time this spring, all residential school survivors will have the opportunity to study, examine and review the settlement agreement over a five-month period. It's during this time that former students can decide if they want to "opt in" or "opt out" of this agreement. If more than 5000 individual survivors decide that they want to "opt out", the federal government can choose not to honour the settlement agreement.

After this five-month period, provided there are not 5000 survivors who decide to opt out of this agreement, it is anticipated that the implementation of the settlement agreement will begin around the end of September 2007. It's at this time survivors will be able to apply for the Common Experience Payment under the settlement agreement.

Meegwetch!

Chief Deborah Chief Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation



My perspective, as a First Nations leader and woman is, I think we need to create our own economic development opportunities therefore becoming self-sustaining as a nation and a people. In doing that, we can help our communities and children as we look out for their future.

As women we need to establish our place in leadership. I think we are on the right track in doing that, but now is the time to be more vocal and more active. It was not too long ago, when women in leadership were not taken seriously, but today is it improving with notable changes.

We need to bring back the traditional roles of women in leadership when we created laws and protected our Treaties for our communities. As women we should continue to educate ourselves on issues that affect First Nation people, in order to help our communities, families and our children.

Chief Viola Eastman

Canupawakpa Dakota Nation



In addressing one of my main issues with womens issues, the concern is that there is no minimal core funding available for women's issues and initiatives. We as women need to share our information with each other, right now. There is not enough information or communications to our grassroots women.

As the Manitoba Representative to the AFN Women's Council, I offer a brief comment to the February 12-14, 2007 Forum for First Nation Women Chiefs that was recently held in Vancouver, BC. This historic three-day forum was a powerful event that voiced the overwhelming concern and frustration with the current situation facing all First Nations communities, families and children. "Women hold the keys in our communities to developing and implementing holistic strategies and policies." I was honoured to participate and witness the very powerful consensus statement that was released.

Chief Linda Two Heart Sagkeeng First Nation



One of the important issues that I believe is important to First Nation women is the Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) issue. This piece of legislation is unfair to women, because they are always the ones to leave the home. Which brings up the issue of land codes. We need to develop them as First Nation people.

Women in leadership roles need to increase so that we can address issues such as Bill C-31. If we lose our status as a people, then we become erased. As a Chief addressing the social issues in Chiefs Assemblies, it can be overwhelming, but our voices are being heard. It's starting to get better.

Traditionally, the women made the decisions for the community, that's why I encourage all our women to take an active role in the issues facing your communities and society as a whole.





First Nations women leaders issue strong statement at conclusion of historic meeting

First Nations women chiefs and councillors released an eleven point consensus statement today following the conclusion of an historic three-day meeting in Vancouver. Critical issues such as poverty, matrimonial real property, the central role of women in sustainable communities, and First Nations jurisdiction were discussed and debated.

“The strength, knowledge, and capacity of our women leaders must be heard and honoured by all First Nations, and all Canadians,” said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine. “I guarantee that this consensus statement will be taken very seriously and will be acted upon by the AFN.”

“We heard powerful First Nations women speak to the critical role that women have played in the past and continue to play in preserving, promoting, and restoring the status and well-being of women and families in our communities,” said Kathleen McHugh, chair of the AFN Women’s Council, which played a key role in organizing the forum. “Women hold the keys in our communities to developing and implementing holistic strategies and policies.

“In one powerful voice, we heard First Nations women leaders state ‘it is now time to bring our children home and we will work collectively to ensure that our collective rights and our children’s rights are respected and upheld,’” added Ms. McHugh. “We will work to bring our children home as First Nations citizens; home to our traditional lands and territories; to homes that are safe from mould and overcrowding; and to communities free from suicide, violence and poverty.”

The following is the complete consensus statement:

“First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors are mad as hell with Crown government interference in our lives and we’re not going to take it anymore. For the first time in modern history, First Nation Women Chiefs and Councillors, from all across Canada, gathered in unity at the Assembly of First Nations National Forum for First Nation Women Chiefs (“Forum”) in Vancouver, British Columbia on February 12-14, 2007. First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors express their overwhelming concern and frustration with the current situation facing First Nations communities, families and children.

This Statement represents the unanimous voice of the Women Chiefs and Councillors present at the Forum to address critical issues affecting our Nations, families and our future to compel change and make progress.

The following statements were adopted by the First Nation Women Chiefs and Councillors:

First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors honor the spirit and intent of the original relationship between First Nations and the British Crown to live in peaceful co-existence, without interference, and to uphold the unceded Inherent authorities given to us by the Creator.

First Nations in Canada are Nations with pre-existing collective rights, responsibilities, languages, cultures, territories and laws.

We maintain our authority to be the law-makers and caretakers of our Nations, our families and our land. First Nation holistic laws will continue to guide our decision making in the face of any and all federal, provincial and territorial legislation. The Crown continues to breach this original compact and interfere with this Inherent jurisdiction, thereby creating and perpetuating poverty conditions amongst our peoples.

Our collective Inherent and Treaty rights must not be diminished or adversely impacted in the development of federal, provincial and territorial law and policy.

The First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors will stand with First Nations governments to advance a comprehensive plan for accountability of all governments, the protection of collective rights and to eradicate poverty and social injustice.

First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors will ensure that our lands, families and children are cared for; ensure that our rights are respected and upheld; and we will be responsible for the decisions that affect our lives. We will not relinquish our rights at the expense of our lands, families and future.

Negotiations and consultations regarding any federal, provincial or territorial initiatives that impact pre-existing Inherent First Nation jurisdictions and Treaty rights must take place with leadership of First Nations governments.

Solutions can be achieved locally, regionally, and nationally by working collectively. First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors call upon the Government of Canada to work together with First Nations to co-create a new future for all our people.

The cycle of poverty, violence, lack of access to quality health care and education, and the non-recognition of Inherent First Nations jurisdiction continue to be perpetuated in federal genocide and assimilationist policies and approaches.

First Nation Women Chiefs and Councillors are united to oppose attempts by the federal government to unilaterally impose legislation and policy such as its initiatives currently reflected in the matrimonial real property process, and the repeal of section 67 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. These federal initiatives that diminish or adversely impact upon our unceded Inherent authorities will be rejected.

We will accomplish this through collective action that supports systemic change. We will stand with the leadership of First Nation governments to advance a comprehensive plan for accountability of all governments; the protection of collective rights; and to eradicate poverty and social injustice in our communities.”

Reprint from AFN — February 14, 2007

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.



AMC Regional First Nations Womens Gathering

On February 26 & 27, 2007, in partnership with Assembly of First Nations, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs hosted a Manitoba First Nations Women’s Regional Gathering to bring together women to provide an overview and update of major issues facing First Nations women. In addition, the forum was set out to engage First Nation women in proposing gender-balanced solutions for issues on Matrimonial Real Property, citizenship, and concluded with developing a Plan of Action.

During the two-days, discussion was highlighted by powerpoint presentations that showcased the urgency of several pieces of legislation facing First Nation people e.g., Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) which is set to be tabled in April 2007 by Minister Jim Prentice, Indian and Northern Affairs. Other areas of discussion included impacts of Bill C-31, violence against women, First Nation citizenship and human rights.

The overall theme of the Forum stressed the importance of talks of women issues at all levels of leadership and communities. For the women who participated, each left with humbled hearts and shared wisdom. Let it be known that our women are the heartbeat and backbone of our nations and future generations.



AMC Regional First Nations Women’s Gathering, Feb. 26 & 27, 2007.



l-r: Samantha Benn, BirdTail Sioux First Nation-Community Health Representative; Councillor Yvonne Bear Bull, BirdTail Sioux First Nation; Chief Viola Eastman, Canupawakpa Dakota Nation; Councillor June LaRocque, Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation; and Councillor Denise McKay, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation at the AMC Regional First Nations Women’s Gathering.

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