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CALGARY MLA IS ALBERTA'S NEW MINISTER OF ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

Len Webber, the two-time Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Calgary-Foothills, was sworn in as Minister of Aboriginal Relations on Jan. 15, 2010.

The former Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations says he is looking forward to his new duties in a new portfolio.

"I look forward to familiarizing myself with the issues, aspirations and concerns of the 47 First Nations and eight Métis Settlements, the Métis Nation Association of Alberta, the Aboriginal leadership and – most importantly – the Aboriginal people who live, work and raise their families in Alberta.

"I'm well aware there are many complex issues facing Aboriginal communities in Alberta. That's why Premier Stelmach created the province's first stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Relations in 2008 and why the Premier and Minister Zwozdesky signed the Protocol Agreement on Government-to-Government Relations with the Grand Chiefs and Vice Chiefs of Treaty 6, 7 and 8."

High on the new Minister's agenda are the reviews of the First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development and the Aboriginal Policy Framework.

The Minister's mandate letter from Premier Ed Stelmach is available on the Aboriginal Relations website at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca.

Before his political career, Minister Webber was the vice-president and director of Webber Academy, a private non-profit university preparatory school in Calgary. The academy provides advanced and challenging curriculum to about 950 above-average and academically gifted students from junior Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Len Webber was born in Calgary. He is the son of former Calgary MLA and cabinet minister Dr. Neil Webber. He earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Calgary and a journeyman electrician certificate from SAIT.

Minister Webber has a history of involvement and volunteerism with community groups, including Hospice Calgary, The Calgary Foundation, MS Society and as a board member of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC).

He has been a volunteer for many fundraising events promoting breast cancer awareness and research and received the Alberta Centennial Medal for contributions to Alberta.

Len Webber, Alberta's Minister of Aboriginal Relations, takes the Oath of Office before Lt.-Gov. Norman Kwong and Alison Redford, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, as Premier Ed Stelmach looks on. The swearing-in ceremony took place at Government House in Edmonton on Jan. 15, 2010.



Government of Alberta ■



Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp. and Twin Butte Energy Ltd received the Alberta Chamber of Resources (ACR) and Alberta Aboriginal Relations Rewarding Partnership award. From left are: Barrie Robb, chair of ACR's Aboriginal Relations Committee and Vice-President, Business Development at Mackenzie Aboriginal Corp.; Joe Dion, CEO, Frog Lake Energy Resources; Maria David-Evans, Deputy Minister, Alberta Aboriginal Relations; Chief Clifford Stanley, Frog Lake First Nation; Jim Saunders, CEO of Twin Butte Energy and Bill Clapperton, Vice President, Regulatory, Stakeholder & Environmental Affairs, Canadian Natural Resources Limited.

REPORT ON STRENGTHENING ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

Alberta's Ministry of Aboriginal Relations has released the third annual report summarizing the ministry's key initiatives aimed at increasing the economic participation of Aboriginal people in Alberta's economy.

The report shows the \$3.8 million invested in the First Nations Economic Partnerships Initiative (FNEPI) in 2008-09 continues to encourage Aboriginal partnerships, strengthen economic capacity and provide entrepreneurial support.

Since the program's inception in 2005, FNEPI has supported 54 strategic economic partnerships with First Nations and Tribal Councils and supported 35 capacity-building projects. The initiative has led to the creation of hundreds of jobs including helping participating organizations to engage regional economic partnership co-ordinators to develop strategies for partnerships with industry. Last year alone, Alberta Employment & Immigration's Aboriginal Development Branch, through FNEPI, managed 190 projects supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurs.

The report showcases unique partnerships that are building community capacity and economic strength in Aboriginal communities. The 2008-09 Aboriginal Economic Partnerships Annual Results Report is available at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca. The website also offers an online tool kit of Aboriginal economic development resources.

Frog Lake Energy is one of many FNEPI success stories.

With early assistance from FNEPI, Frog Lake First Nation developed partnerships with industry that led to a joint venture between Twin Butte Energy Ltd. and Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp. (a Frog Lake First Nation company).

This joint venture has resulted in the most successful wholly-owned First Nations energy company in Canada. Production exceeds 1300 barrels per day, current working capital exceeds \$15 million and cash flow of \$1 million per quarter. Frog Lake Energy's success has also benefitted the First Nation, which has invested in the future by creating new opportunities for young members.

The joint venture partners received the coveted Alberta Chamber of Resources and Alberta Aboriginal Relations Rewarding Partnership award at the Alberta Chamber of Resources 74th Annual Awards Banquet on Feb. 19, 2010 at Edmonton's Shaw Conference Centre.

"Our partnership is an example of how determination and the will to make something work for both parties can lead to success," said Joe Dion, president of Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp.



HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP WILL STRENGTHEN FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

The goal of a historic memorandum of understanding on First Nations education in Alberta is to have First Nation students in Alberta achieve or exceed the outcomes and successes of all students in the province.

Representatives of the Government of Alberta, the federal government and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta gathered at Tsuu T'ina Nation High School on Feb. 24, 2010 to sign the agreement.

"Education is the foundation upon which the future success of First Nation children, youth and communities is built," said Len Webber, Alberta's Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

"This historic MOU will significantly advance our work with First Nations and federal partners on achieving our shared vision for First Nation education in Alberta."

Also signing the document were federal Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl and Alberta Education Minister Dave Hancock as well as Treaty 6 Grand Chief Eddy Makokis; Grand Chief Charles Weaselhead of Treaty 7 and Allan Adam, Grand Chief of Treaty 8.

The MOU provides a framework for change and collaboration that will address a range of education-related issues including teacher recruitment and training, parental and community engagement, Treaty and cultural awareness and on-going work on tuition and education service agreements.



Signatories to a historic agreement on First Nations education in Alberta included (from left) Dave Hancock, Alberta Minister of Education; Chuck Strahl, federal Minister of Indian Affairs; Treaty 8 Grand Chief Allan Adam; Grand Chief Eddy Makokis of Treaty 6 and Treaty 7 Grand Chief Charles Weasel Head. The signing ceremony was held Feb. 24, 2010 at the Tsuu T'ina Junior-Senior High School on the Tsuu T'ina Reserve near Calgary.

"The MOU on First Nation Education marks a new beginning for all First Nation children in the province. One key aspect of the MOU is the honoring of our culture and language and maintaining our identity to guide our children to success," said Grand Chief Weaselhead.

The MOU will also help establish a new Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre and the Alberta First Nations Education Circle.

FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW

Alberta was the first province to develop a comprehensive consultation policy on resource development with First Nations and industry. The Supreme Court of Canada has determined that the federal and provincial governments have a duty to consult with First Nations where its land management and resource development decisions may adversely impact First Nations' Treaty rights.

Alberta's First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development acknowledges and respects First Nations' Treaty rights, creates more confidence and predictability for all parties and reduces potential land-use conflicts.

The policy, released in 2005, is currently under review – fulfilling the province's commitment to conduct a thorough assessment of Alberta's approach to consultation four years after its policy's implementation. Premier Ed Stelmach met with the Grand Chiefs and Vice Chiefs of Treaty 6, 7 and 8 in May 2009, almost exactly four years to the day after the original policy was released

The associated consultation guidelines, first released in 2006 and updated in 2007, are also being reviewed to ensure Alberta is continuing to satisfy its duty to consult.

Alberta is committed to engaging First Nations and industry in the review process to ensure they have opportunities to provide substantive input on strengthening the process for the benefit of all parties.

Alberta and First Nations began discussions in late October 2009 aimed at improving the province's overall consultation process. A consultation sub-table has been created under the 2008 First Nations Protocol Agreement on Government-to-Government Relations.

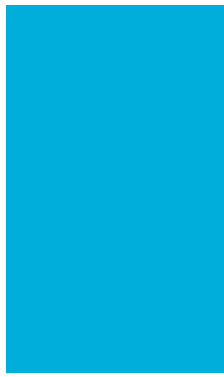
"I am pleased to hear the Alberta Treaty Chiefs have agreed to participate in the consultation policy review process," said Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber. "First Nations' participation in the review is critical to ensure their Treaty rights and interests are respected within the consultation process."

A revised policy is expected to be released in fall 2010, once the input of all parties has been considered and the government has approved all changes.

The First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development and associated guidelines can be found on the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations' website at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca.



Asani, a three-woman contemporary Aboriginal singing group from Edmonton, entertained visitors to Alberta Plaza at the Vancouver Olympics on Feb. 14, 2010. Debbie Houle, Sherryl Sewepagaham and Sarah Pocklington make up the group, whose name means rock in the Cree language. Alberta Plaza attracted an average of about 1,000 visitors from around the world lined up each day to dine on Alberta food products and enjoy free concerts by more than 40 Alberta performers.



SPRING SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE OPENS WITH THRONE SPEECH, BUDGET



Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber (right) was joined by Gerald Cunningham, president of the Métis Settlements General Council, and Audrey Poitras, president of the Métis Nation of Alberta Association, at the Alberta Legislature on Feb. 4, 2010. The Métis leaders joined the Minister to listen to the Speech from the Throne outlining the government's agenda for the current session of the Legislature.

The 2010 spring session of the Legislature got under way on Feb. 4, 2010 with the traditional reading of the Speech from the Throne by Lt.-Gov. Norman Kwong.

The speech outlines the government's agenda for the coming session. It included a commitment to conduct the review of the First Nations Consultation Policy and Guidelines on Land Management and Resource Development this year (See page 3), which Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber says "will give us another tool to improve competitiveness.

"I believe our consultation policy is part and parcel of our competitiveness strategy," the Minister said. "I expect the competitiveness review will highlight the

importance of an efficient and robust regulatory system – including consultation with First Nations – that ensures the most competitive environment possible for resource development in Alberta."

The next event on the legislative calendar was the release of the Government of Alberta's 2010-11 budget.

Despite current fiscal challenges, the budget increased funding for health, basic education and supports for seniors and vulnerable Albertans, while maintaining the lowest tax regime in Canada. This is thanks in large part to cost savings found across government that are being reinvested in these priority areas.

As part of plans to balance the budget by 2012-13, a detailed review of government spending was undertaken and \$1.3 billion in savings were identified. In light of an improved revenue picture, government was able to re-invest these savings into priority areas, without jeopardizing its goal to return to balanced budgets within three years.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations budget amounts to \$152.5 million for the current fiscal year. That includes \$118 million which flows through Aboriginal Relations to the First Nations Development Fund (FNDF) from a portion of the proceeds of government-owned slot machines in the five First Nations casinos in Alberta.

Despite tough economic conditions, more than \$8.6 million in government funding has been earmarked for First Nation consultation capacity-building and development of economic partnerships in the current fiscal year, said Webber.

The full text of the Speech from the Throne and the 2010-11 Alberta budget can be found on the Aboriginal Relations website at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca.

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