



Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6

July 7, 2015

Colleagues,

As you know, our government is committed to renewing and improving our relationship with Indigenous peoples. We intend to work with Indigenous peoples as true partners to ensure that:

- Their constitutional rights are protected;
- The air, land and water that they, and all our communities, rely on is protected; and
- They can build more prosperous, self-reliant and culturally strong communities.

The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* speaks to Indigenous people's basic human rights, language, equality, land and their right to control their own lives. At its heart, the UN Declaration encourages all of us to celebrate and preserve Indigenous cultures and traditions and to work alongside Indigenous people to ensure they are participating in decisions that concern them.

In considering the objectives of the UN Declaration, our approach will be based on the principle that the bounty of Alberta's resources must be shared by all Albertans. Our task will be to engage directly with Indigenous people to find a common and practical understanding of how the principles of the UN Declaration can be implemented in a way that is consistent with our Constitution and with Alberta law.

I expect that the most challenging part of the discussion will be related to land and resources. Many Indigenous people in Alberta are directly employed in or indirectly benefitting from Alberta's resource-driven economy. They don't want to stop resource development, but, like all Albertans, do want to ensure the air, land and water are protected so their children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy the land. I believe there is balance to be found here, working in partnership with Indigenous people so they are able to participate in a more meaningful way, and therefore benefit from, the development of natural resources in the province and the preservation and conservation of the environment.

The UN Declaration is broad-reaching and has the potential to impact how we work with Indigenous people in a myriad of ways. This is why I am asking you now, as Cabinet Ministers, to conduct a review, including budget implications, of your Ministry's policies, programs and legislation that may require changes based on the principles of the UN Declaration. I look forward also to hearing about programs and initiatives already under way that speak to the promise of the UN Declaration.

As you move forward in this analysis, you will need to work closely with Indigenous leaders. The anticipated establishment of engagement tables with each of the three Treaty areas could be the vehicles for this engagement later in the fall. Engagement with the Metis Nation of Alberta Association and the Metis Settlements General Council must also occur. I have asked the Minister of Aboriginal Relations to coordinate your submissions and bring them forward for our consideration.

There is some truly good work already happening throughout the province that reflects some of the objectives of the UN Declaration. For example, we are working hard to help return sacred ceremonial objects from across the world to Indigenous communities in Alberta where they belong. We prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of race or ancestry. We are introducing mandatory education for all our students in the histories and cultures of Indigenous people, including residential schools. And, Alberta is also the only province to have established Metis governments and Metis lands.

These are just a few examples of things we are doing. But there is more we can, and will, do.

I look forward to seeing the results of your review and your ideas for implementation by February 1, 2016 so we can chart a path forward together with Indigenous people on this journey of reconciliation.

Sincerely,



Rachel Notley
Premier of Alberta