

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The McGuinty government is committed to building stronger and more vibrant relationships with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Ontario, with a goal of improving the quality of life of and supporting the young and growing Aboriginal population.

2009 Achievements

The McGuinty government is actively working to improve economic opportunities and to promote economic sustainability for Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Initiatives include:

- Moving forward with a \$250 million loan guarantee program to support Aboriginal participation in energy projects
- To assist First Nation economic development, the government will co-host the first Ontario First Nation Economic Forum in the fall of 2009
- In the spirit of building a better working relationship, Ontario hosted the Working Relationships: Principles and Practices Forum on consultation and accommodation best practices with government, industry and First Nations in the spring of 2009
- The establishment of a number of relationship agreements and tables with First Nations
 - These include the Anishinabek Nation Bilateral Roundtable and a Letter of Intent with the Grand Council of Treaty #3
 - Ontario is continuing discussions with Nishnawbe Aski Nation on a number of issues through the Northern Table process
- The signing of a Framework Agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario, with the intent of working together to improve the well-being of children, families and communities while working to protect and promote the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people
- The government will be a key sponsor of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council Workforce Connex Summit in May 2009.

In its first full year as a ministry, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, together with its Aboriginal partners, began several multi-year strategic initiatives. Even in these difficult economic times, the McGuinty government is committed to continuing these important projects. These include:

- New Relationship Fund
 - In 2009-10, \$19 million to help Aboriginal communities develop the resources, capacity and skills necessary to enhance and improve business and economic development partnership opportunities

- Modernization of Ontario's *Mining Act*
 - First Nations and Métis are involved in a fundamental revision of the *Mining Act* to respond to the concerns of First Nation and Métis communities, while promoting balanced, sustainable development and a vibrant industry
- Resource Benefits Sharing
 - The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and other ministries are talking with Aboriginal communities province-wide about ways to share in the economic benefits of natural resource development
 - Resource Benefits Sharing is a mechanism to share the benefits of natural resource development with Aboriginal communities and a way to encourage skills training, job creation, economic spinoffs to improve regional economies, and business partnerships between Aboriginal communities and natural resource companies
- Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee
 - Work will continue to assess and implement the Ipperwash Report's recommendations, including the First Nations policing review
- Far North Planning
 - First Nation communities are collaborating with the government to map and permanently protect an interconnected network of conservation lands across the Far North
 - The planning process for the Far North enshrines a new respect and working relationship with First Nations through land use planning. Community-based Land Use Plans will be led by First Nations working jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources. These plans will require the agreement of local First Nations. Land use planning will result in First Nations having a greater say in the future of their communities and will balance the social, environmental and economic interests of First Nations and Ontario
 - In 2008, the government committed \$30 million over four years to support this planning and to build capacity for Far North First Nations.

Achievements Since 2003

Improving Economic Opportunities

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has introduced a number of initiatives to improve economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities:

- Signing a historic \$3 billion Gaming Revenue Sharing and Financial Agreement, announced in 2008, which provides a stable revenue source to First Nations to invest in education, health, economic, community and social development
- The New Relationship Fund helps Aboriginal communities develop the resources, capacity and skills necessary to enhance and improve business and economic development partnership opportunities. Since its launch in December 2008, 120 First Nation communities and Métis organizations have received funding to build core consultation capacity in relation to land and resources
- \$14 million to fund community and business-related projects through the Aboriginal Community Capital Grants program to help improve the quality of life in communities and provide a better environment for business and industry
- More than \$29 million to Aboriginal communities through Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation programs, including waterfront development and cultural attractions.

Improving Quality of Life

The province invests about \$600 million annually on programs and services for Aboriginal people through ministries across the Ontario government. This includes investments in children and social services, health services, justice and policing initiatives, and education and training programs.

Initiatives to improve the quality of life of Ontario's Aboriginal people since 2003 include:

- \$6 million annually to the Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin programs to provide at-risk urban Aboriginal children and their families with culturally relevant and community-based supports
- \$1.5 million, to be matched by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, to establish a Research Chair in Aboriginal and Rural Health at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine
- Legislation passed in May 2008 establishing Algoma University as an independent, degree-granting university. Algoma now has greater independence to focus on the postsecondary needs of the north and the significant population of Aboriginal students it serves
- As part of the government response to the recommendations of the May 2007 Linden Report, Ontario is moving to transfer the Ipperwash Provincial Park lands to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations
- Establishing the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee to work together with First Nations and Métis to assess and implement the report's recommendations
- Committing \$80 million to fund off-reserve housing units for Aboriginal families that is being allocated in partnership with Aboriginal communities
- Providing an endowment of \$3 million to the Council of Ontario Universities to support the creation of a Research Chair in Métis Studies, in cooperation with the Métis Nation of Ontario. The University of Ottawa has been selected to host the Research Chair in Métis Studies, and the university will contribute an additional \$1 million. The Chair will increase research and create a greater understanding of the Métis people in Ontario.