

The Kelowna Accord: Closing the Gap?

Prepared by the Metro Coalition for a Non-Racist Society

The Kelowna Accord is the conclusion of a process called the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable. It resulted in a set of **agreements between Aboriginal leaders and the Canadian government**, concerning **standards of living and basic human rights**. It sets targets and allocates money to reduce the disparities between Aboriginal communities and the overall Canadian average. The degree of involvement of officials from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as Aboriginal leaders, communities, and organizations, is unique in Canadian history.

The Kelowna Accord focuses on:

- ❖ Health
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Economic Opportunities
- ❖ Relationships (between Aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada)

Who negotiated the accord?

Negotiations were primarily conducted by representatives of the government of Canada, the provincial and territorial governments, and five organizations representing Aboriginal people:

- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (representing the Inuit First Nation)
- Métis National Council (representing the Métis First Nation)
- Assembly of First Nations (representing all other First Nations)
- Congress of Aboriginal People (representing urban and off-reserve Aboriginal people)
- Native Women's Association of Canada (representing Aboriginal women)

Aboriginal organizations, elders, service providers, and private sector groups also contributed to some parts of the process.

What agreements were made?

The First Ministers' Meeting in November 2005 resulted in 5-year and 10-year commitments:

- how to reduce certain gaps in standard of living that exist between Aboriginal people and Canadians in general
- how much money would be spent
- how to evaluate success of the programs.

Some examples of the commitments made:

- ❖ Accelerate process of ensuring **safe drinking water**
- ❖ Investment in college/university **bursaries, scholarships, and apprenticeships**
- ❖ Implementing First Nations jurisdiction over **on-reserve education**
- ❖ Creation of an **Inuit Secretariat** within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
- ❖ Renewal of **Land Claim and Self-Government** policies
- ❖ Exploration with the Métis of options for objectively verifiable **Métis identification**

In total, the federal government committed **\$5.1 billion**.

What follow-up was planned?

The Kelowna Accord called for:

- ❖ A First Ministers' and national Aboriginal leaders' meeting in "two or three years when they are in a position to measure progress" (2007 or 2008)
- ❖ An annual two-day meeting between Aboriginal Affairs ministers and national Aboriginal leaders, including a First Nations forum, an Inuit forum, and a Métis forum

What has happened since the Accord was signed?

Nov. 24-25, 2005	Accord signed at First Ministers' Meeting, Kelowna
Nov. 29, 2005	Liberal government dissolved
Jan 23, 2006	Conservative Party forms Government of Canada
Jan. 24, 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon Premier Dennis Fentie states that he expects that the new government will live up to commitments already made in the Kelowna Accord. • BC Premier Gordon Campbell calls on the new government to implement the Kelowna Accord. • Manitoba Premier Gary Doer states that he is optimistic that the new government will follow through with the Kelowna Accord, since it was agreed to by premiers of "all political stripes." <p>Many other Aboriginal leaders and Canadian politicians have reaffirmed their support and called on the Harper government to implement the Accord</p>
May 2, 2006	2006 federal budget presented, without Kelowna Accord provisions
July 26, 2006	Provincial and territorial premiers met with Aboriginal leaders and restated their support for the Kelowna Accord
March 19, 2007	2007 federal budget presented, without Kelowna Accord provisions
Present	No further consultation or implementation has taken place.

What are some of the criticisms of the Accord?

- ❖ Many issues remain to be addressed to define how the targets will be reached, who will take **responsibility** for what, and exactly how the money will be spent.
- ❖ In some cases, it is not clear which **indicators** should be used to measure success, and who will collect the data. At the same time, too much focus on gathering data to meet statistical standards could detract from action on change.
- ❖ It is not always clear **who can represent Aboriginal people** in negotiations with the government of Canada, and whether that is a nation-to-nation negotiation or not.
- ❖ **Devolving responsibilities** onto provincial governments could detract from struggles by First Nations to gain recognition of self-determination from the federal government. For this reason, First Nations located in the province of Québec boycotted the First Ministers' Meeting.
- ❖ The Accord's trend toward a **focus on all Aboriginal people, rather than on individual Nations** and bands, could undermine their historical and legal relationship with the federal Crown.
- ❖ The focus on "closing the gap" could detract from struggles to have **treaty rights and land claims** acknowledged and resolved.
- ❖ The AFN took the position that NWAC and CAP should not be at the table because they are not governments.
- ❖ NWAC and CAP had problems with the "**distinction-based**" approach in which matters relating to non-Status Indians, urban Aboriginal residents, and Aboriginal women were categorized as "cross-cutting issues."

Timeline of Negotiations

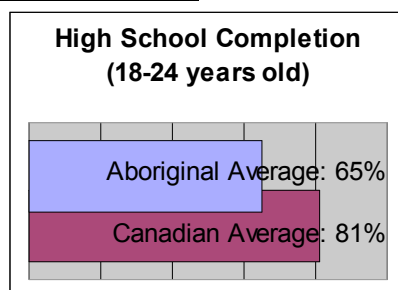
The Kelowna Accord represents a year and a half of negotiations. In April, 2004, 147 participants were invited from federal and provincial governments, as well as Aboriginal organizations and communities, to participate in a general roundtable. Later that year, seven “sectoral roundtables” were organized, one for each of the focus areas (except Education and Relationships, for which there were two each). In early 2005, a policy retreat was held where five organizations representing First Nations and Aboriginal people developed their own individual agreements with the government. A final document was then presented at the First Ministers’ Meeting, held in Kelowna on Nov. 24, 2005. The “Kelowna Accord” may refer to the final document, or to the entire process.

Timeline	Event	Participants
April 19, 2004	<i>Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable on Strengthening the Relationship</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Representatives from 27 Aboriginal organizations ❖ Four elders and their two assistants ❖ Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs ❖ Government members of Aboriginal Caucus ❖ House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development, and Natural Resources ❖ Senior officials from provincial and territorial governments ❖ Other federal representatives
Nov. 2004 – Jan. 2005	<i>Sectoral Roundtables</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 750 invitees from Aboriginal organizations, service providers, government, and private sector ❖ Led by the minister of the relevant federal government departments (Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Industry Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat).
May 31, 2005	<i>Policy Retreat</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assembly of First Nations ❖ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami ❖ Métis National Council ❖ Native Women’s Association of Canada ❖ Congress of Aboriginal Peoples ❖ Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs
Nov. 24-25, 2005	<i>Kelowna Accord – First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders: Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Leaders of the 5 national Aboriginal organizations represented at the Policy Retreat ❖ Provincial premiers and territorial leaders ❖ Prime Minister of Canada (then Paul Martin)

Examples of the Commitments

Note: “Canadian Average” aggregates all people residing in Canada, including Aboriginal people

Area of concern

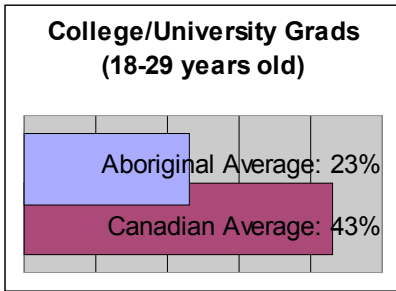


Short-term target

- ❖ Begin to explore establishment of National Inuit Education Resource and Research Centre within 12 months
- ❖ Begin to explore development of Métis nation Centre of Excellence in Education and Innovation within 12 months
- ❖ Increase number of Aboriginal high school grads by 22,000 in 5 years

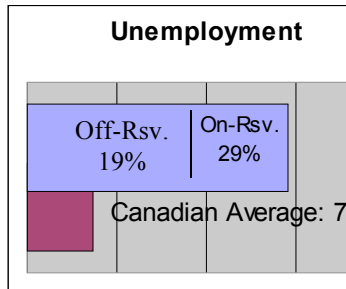
Long-term target

- ❖ Increase number of Aboriginal grads by 110,000 in 10 years



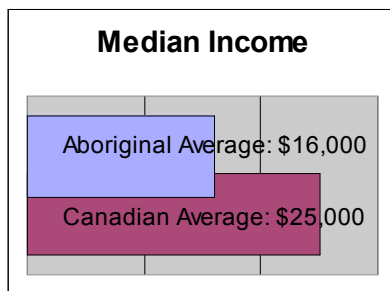
- ❖ Increase number of Aboriginal college/university grads by 14,800 in 5 years

- ❖ Increase number of Aboriginal college/university grads by 37,000 in 10 years



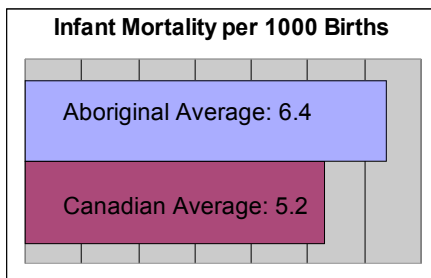
- ❖ Increase Aboriginal employment levels by 30% in 5 years

- ❖ Increase Aboriginal employment rate by 50% in 10 years



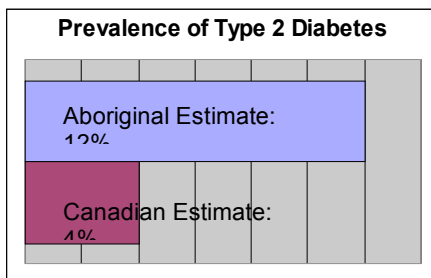
- ❖ Increase Aboriginal median income to 82% of Canadian average in 5 years

- ❖ Bring broadband access to 250 more communities in 10 years



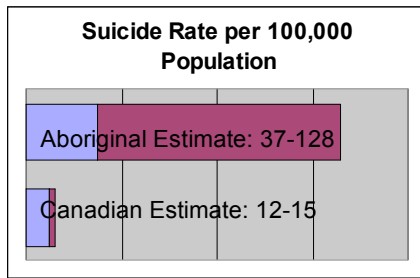
- ❖ Reduce infant mortality by 20% in 5 years

- ❖ Reduce infant mortality by 50% in 10 years



- ❖ Reduce Type 2 diabetes by 20% in 5 years

- ❖ Reduce Type 2 diabetes by 50% in 10 years



- ❖ Reduce youth suicide by 20% in 5 years
- ❖ Reduce youth suicide by 50% in 5 years
- ❖ Double the number of health professionals by 2016

Housing

On-reserve housing shortage is 20,000 – 35,000 and growing.

Off-reserve, core housing need is 76% -- 130% higher among Aboriginal people than the Canadian average

- ❖ Create an Inuit Housing Institute
- ❖ Begin exploring a Métis Nation Housing Institute within 12 months
- ❖ Reduce on-reserve housing shortage by 40% in 5 years
- ❖ Reduce the gap in off-reserve housing by 50% in 5 years
- ❖ Reduce housing gap in the North by 35% in 5 years
- ❖ Reduce on-reserve housing shortage by 80% in 10 years
- ❖ Bring off-reserve housing access to equal Canadian average in 10 years
- ❖ Bring housing access in the North to 70 % of the Canadian average in 10 years

Additional Agreements

As well, at the Policy Retreat of May 2005, each of the 5 national Aboriginal organizations secured their own agreement with the federal government. They are:

Organization	Agreement	Focus
Assembly of First Nations	<i>A First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments</i>	❖ Implementing Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution on Aboriginal and treaty rights
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	<i>Partnership Accord between the Inuit of Canada and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada</i>	❖ Negotiating a Canada-Inuit Action Plan by March 31, 2006
Métis National Council	<i>Métis Nation Framework Agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and the Métis National Council</i>	❖ Examine the potential for devolving certain programs and services for Métis to the MNC ❖ Invite provincial governments from to participate in multilateral processes
Native Women’s Association of Canada	<i>Accord on Co-operative Policy Development between the Native Women’s Association of Canada and the Government of Canada</i>	❖ Review NWAC’s involvement in the development of federal policies related to First Nations and Métis women
Congress of Aboriginal People	<i>Accord on Cooperative Policy Development between the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Government of Canada</i>	❖ Discuss how to enhance CAP’s involvement in the development of federal policies related to Métis, non-Status and off-reserve Status Indians

Details of the Conservative Party's Response to the Kelowna Accord

Dissolution of Parliament

Four days after the meeting of the first ministers in Kelowna, the Liberal government under Paul Martin was dissolved. The Kelowna Accord was still on Parliament's order paper, and so would have needed to be reintroduced for reading by the next government. Also stalled on the order paper was the Canadian ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which had been supported by the Liberals.

Election Campaigning

During election campaigning, members of the Conservative Party made several ambiguous remarks concerning support for the Kelowna Accord. The Conservative party issued a press release on January 11 stating, "The Conservative Party supports all of the objectives, targets, and principles as laid out in the agreement. A Conservative government will work closely with the provinces and Aboriginal peoples to develop a responsible fiscal plan to meet these objectives."

New Government

In 2006, the Conservative government pledged \$450 million for Aboriginal communities. They further allocated \$150 million in 2006 and \$300 million in 2007 to improve education programs, provide clean water, upgrade mostly off-reserve housing and close the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal Canadians and the rest of the population.

The 2007 budget included \$70 million over two years for job training, strengthening the Aboriginal Justice Strategy, and to help First Nations join the East Coast commercial fishery. However, this falls short of the \$5.1 billion committed by the Kelowna Accord. As well, there has so far been no process implemented to "work closely with the provinces and Aboriginal peoples to develop a responsible fiscal plan to meet these objectives."

In a meeting with Aboriginal leaders on July 26, 2006, provincial and territorial premiers restated their support for the Kelowna Accord.

For More Info:

This document is accurate to the best of our knowledge.

For a full list of citations, for questions/comments, or if you notice any errors or omissions, please contact the Metro Coalition for a Non-Racist Society:

mcnrs@hotmail.com

<http://www.chebucto.ca/CommunitySupport/MCNRS>

or by phone:

c/o 902-826-1125

These resources may also be helpful:

Canada-Aboriginal Peoples
Roundtable Website

<http://www.aboriginalroundtable.ca>

- Full text of all reports and background papers
- Links to the 5 lead Aboriginal organizations
- Contact information for all involved government bodies

Aboriginal Roundtable to
Kelowna Accord

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/prb0604-e.htm>

- Summary prepared by Library of Parliament's Information and Research Service
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