

ABORIGINAL FRAMEWORK NEWS

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Aboriginal Policy Framework (APF)

Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework, provides a framework for government policy and to guide Alberta's relations with Aboriginal people. It is a unique policy statement in that it applies across all Alberta ministries.

In the framework, the Government of Alberta makes a commitment to work with Aboriginal people, other governments, industry and other interested parties, to address two goals:

- Individual and community well-being and self-reliance.
- Clarification of federal, provincial and Aboriginal roles and responsibilities.

The first goal is intended to address the gap in living standards between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Albertans, with an emphasis on capacity building and increasing participation in the economy.

The second goal is intended to clarify federal, provincial and Aboriginal roles and responsibilities. The Alberta government will work with the First Nation and Métis leadership to encourage the federal government to fulfill its responsibilities to Aboriginal people and to support the development of Aboriginal self-government.

Implementation of the APF will require collaboration and partnerships. In addition to working with partners from the Aboriginal community, other governments and industry, Alberta government ministries are committed to working together to address Aboriginal issues in their business plans and report progress in their annual reports.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework

Enhancing Educational Opportunities For Aboriginal People

The Government of Alberta is committed to enhancing educational opportunities for Aboriginal people. As part of this commitment, Alberta Learning undertook The Native Education Policy Review in 1999.

A Native Education Policy Review Advisory Committee was established, consisting of representation from First Nations and Métis authorities, key education stakeholders, and government, to assist in the review. During the review, Alberta Learning received valuable input about the education goals of Aboriginal learners and parents in the province.



The Native Education Policy Review will set the policy framework for developing enhanced educational opportunities for Aboriginal people in Alberta.

Public consultations held during the Native Education Policy Review laid the foundation for the development of the *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. Approximately 5,000 participants had a chance to voice their opinions to the Review Committee. Community input was received through contracts with First Nations and Métis authorities, who led public consultations within their communities. Consultations with education stakeholders and other Albertans were also held. The Policy Framework was publicly released in March 2002.

The Policy Framework is designed to be a living document, expected to change over time as the vision, policy, goals, principles, performance measures and outcomes are implemented and evaluated. It is anticipated that the Policy Framework will help stakeholders identify their role in helping First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners achieve their education goals and will help guide planning and evaluation of Aboriginal learner programming.

The long-term expected outcomes are to:

- Improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner success in Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 and in postsecondary education.
- Recognize and increase parent involvement in the education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.
- Strengthen the relationships between First Nations, Métis and Inuit people,

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FACTS AND FIGURES

- Total number of Aboriginal people in Alberta (1996): **155,655**
- Number of First Nations' Chiefs and Councils: 47
- Number of Indian Reserves in Alberta: **124**
- Total acreage of Indian Reserves in Alberta: **1.7 million acres** (approx.)
- Number of Registered Indians in Alberta in 2001: **87,703**
- Percentage of the Registered Indian population living on reserve: 63%
- Smallest First Nation population: Duncan's First Nation, population 191
- Largest First Nation population: Blood Tribe, population **9,265**
- Number of Métis Settlements: 8
- Total acreage of Métis Settlements in Alberta: 1.25 million acres
- Number of Métis Settlement Members (1998): **6,577**
- Percentage of Alberta's Aboriginal population living in the City of Edmonton: 21%



Fostering Potential & Participation Moving Forward Through Collaborative Relationships

A Message from Premier Ralph Klein

I am particularly proud of the Government of Alberta's

new Aboriginal Policy Framework – "Strengthening Relationships." By adopting the policy, the government is unique in that it acknowledges and fosters the growing role, potential and participation of Aboriginal people in all aspects of Alberta's society and economy. There are two main goals of the Aboriginal Policy Framework. Firstly, it looks at ways to improve the socio-economic opportunities for Aboriginal Albertans as individuals and their communities. Secondly, the policy is aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments and communities.

The government has also made Aboriginal policy one of its four cross-ministry policy priority initiatives that were announced in the recent budget. The work is ongoing. All those involved know we are facing many challenges and barriers in achieving the important goals of the policy framework, but we are making progress.

I strongly support this Aboriginal Policy Framework. All Alberta ministries are involved in addressing issues of interest to Aboriginal peoples. Our government is fostering strong co-operative partnerships and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal Albertans, federal and municipal governments, industry and other Albertans.



The Power of Partnerships Championing the Alberta Aboriginal Policy Framework

A Message from Minister Pearl Calahasen

As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs

and Northern Development, I am responsible for the implementation of the Aboriginal Policy Framework, "Strengthening Relationships." The development of the framework was initiated by my colleague, the Hon. David Hancock, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Since the document's release in September 2000, I have been conducting extensive discussions on the goals and commitments presented in this policy with Aboriginal communities throughout Alberta. I have also met with key industry sectors and leaders to discuss their connection to the policy.

The government is working continuously to achieve the goals of this policy framework. The fact that the APF is again the subject of one of the government's four cross-ministry initiatives illustrates the level of commitment of our caucus, cabinet and our partners in all government ministries.

We all know and appreciate that it is going to be a long journey to reach the ambitious goals in the policy framework. We are encouraged when we see the real commitment to policy objectives from leaders in Alberta's industry and Aboriginal governments. The challenges involved are significant, but I know we all have made a very good start and are steadfast in our resolve to reach the positive ends of this policy.

Alberta-Siksika Protocol Agreement

The Alberta-Siksika Protocol Agreement was signed at a ceremony on November 6, 2001. The document signifies the agreement by the Siksika Nation and the Government of Alberta to enter into ongoing productive negotiations in order to resolve various ongoing issues. In their remarks at the signing ceremony, Premier Klein, Minister Calahasen and Chief Stimson all noted the significance of this type of bilateral collaborative process to settle mutual concerns.



Front Row: Minister Pearl Calahasen, Premier Ralph Klein, Chief Stimson Sr. and Councilor Eldon Weasel Child. Back Row: Neil Reddekopp (AAND), Clement Doore (Master of Ceremonies), Dave Johnston (AAND).

Lifting the Silence - An Aboriginal Conference On Suicide Prevention

About 500 people attended the Edmonton-based national conference on suicide prevention in Aboriginal communities related to the theme "Lifting the Silence -together we can make a difference." Participants came from all across Canada and included frontline workers, Aboriginal leaders and Elders. They came with the purpose of "starting the discussion on suicide and lifting the taboo of such discussion amongst Aboriginal peoples," said Gilman Cardinal, one of the

conference organizers and presenters.

Much of the conference focus was on the plight of Aboriginal youth, ages 15 to 24, who have the highest rate of suicide in the

culture. In contrast, non-Aboriginals have the highest suicide rate in the 24 to 35 age bracket.

A conclusion from the conference was that a national approach was necessary. Still,

programs and initiatives need to be community-based and involve the high risk age group of 15 to 24 year olds. Gilman Cardinal said, "One of the central issues around suicides in this group was the lack of job and career opportunities for them, particularly within their individual communities. There are good training and educational opportunities that create some hope but there are no jobs or opportunities to apply those skills and training once the young people return to their communities." The high unemployment rates on reserves, and particularly amongst the Aboriginal youth, many of whom do not want to leave the communities, add to the pressures.

Cardinal suggested Aboriginal youth needed more chances to identify good role models especially amongst Aboriginal leaders. According to Cardinal, the solutions to the growing problem require the support and involvement of mentors and role models but also the engagement of entire families.

Young Aboriginal men and women need more opportunities to get apprenticeship and experiential training within their communities. Young people should also aim higher, said Cardinal. "I tell young people, don't look to be the teacher's aid or the nursing aid. Think about becoming the teacher or the nurse."

Cardinal, who lost a son to suicide, concluded his conference comments by saying his main reason in speaking was to show young people considering suicide those who are left behind. Their families who love them the most have pain for the rest of their lives.

Meeting Needs — Building Opportunities: Aboriginal Participation in Apprenticeship

Many trade sectors in Alberta are experiencing labour shortages, particularly in the central and northern areas of the province. At the same time, Aboriginal communities are faced with significant unemployment numbers.

To look toward a solution to both problems, the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Committee, supported by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada and the Alberta government, was established in 1999 to investigate, recommend and implement approaches for increasing Aboriginal peoples' participation in the apprenticeship trades. The committee includes representation from Aboriginal organizations/communities, industry and educational jurisdictions.

"An employment support model to assist Aboriginal people to enter and complete apprenticeship programs is a unique component of the project."

This model will be put into practice in the pilot project that will be implemented over the next few years in Edmonton, Fort McMurray and High Level. If the project proves successful, it could be utilized as a model across Canada.

The official launch of the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAAP) is scheduled to take place in summer 2002. For more information, contact the AAAP office at (780) 408-1840.

Dunbow School Cemetery Re-interment and Ceremony

The Dunbow School was located on the banks of the Highwood River, 40 km southeast of Calgary. It opened in 1884 with Father Albert Lacombe as its first principal. About 430 students from Blackfoot, Cree, Métis, Sarcee (Tsuu T'ina) and non-native backgrounds attended Dunbow School until its closure in 1922. Due to poor health care and increased exposure to diseases such as tuberculosis, as many as 73 First Nation and Métis students may have died at Dunbow School. Some were buried at an informal cemetery near the school, on the banks of the Highwood River. Over the years, the river has eroded the ground beneath the cemetery, causing exposure of casket fragments and human remains.

In October 2000, Alberta deputy ministers directed a cross-ministry committee of senior officials to deal with the ongoing gravesite exposure at the Dunbow School Cemetery. The committee studied a number of options before recommending that existing remains be moved to a nearby protected Provincial Historic Site marking the location of the original school. First Nation and Métis groups agreed in principle with the proposed approach. From November 2000 to May

2001, the cross-ministry committee coordinated a number of activities, including survey work, ground-penetrating radar, on-site meetings and ceremonies by Aboriginal Elders, meetings with private landowners, preparation of legal releases and title notations, and provision of funeral home services.

The Government of Alberta, with the co-operation and concurrence of First Nation and Métis representatives, contracted with Snodgrass Funeral Home of High River to remove and rebury the human remains. Prior to removal of the human remains, traditional ceremonialists and Elders held a pipe ceremony to offer spiritual protection for the people involved in removing the remains and to ensure that the spirits of those buried were not disturbed during reburial. Removal of the human remains began on March 22, 2001.

The Government of Alberta worked closely with First Nation and Métis representatives to ensure that disinterment and reburial was respectful of cultural traditions. On May 5, 2001, Traditional and Christian ceremonies were conducted to commemorate reburial of 34 human remains from the Dunbow School Cemetery.



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2001 National Aboriginal Youth Conference



Minister Calahasen and Secretary of State for Children and Youth, Ethel Blondin Andrew

Over 150 Aboriginal youth delegates between the ages of 18 and 29 gathered in Edmonton from October 26 – 28, 2001. The conference was a key step in the implementation of the *National Aboriginal Youth Strategy*, which was approved by federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and the five National Aboriginal Organization Leaders in 1999. For a copy of the strategy, contact Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, or go to http://www17.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ARO/Youth/Youth_Strategy/youth_strategy.pdf.

The youth delegates came from across Canada and were selected by representatives of various Aboriginal organizations. Human Resources Development Canada covered the travel, accommodation and conference costs for the youth delegates.

Minister Calahasen addressed the youth delegates at the opening banquet and conveyed the message that while the strategy helped to set the stage for the conference, Aboriginal youth must now occupy that stage and identify their key issues and priorities. This call for feedback was followed up by an invitation to bring those issues and priorities forward to ministers and leaders at their next FPTA meeting.

The conference was very productive and many important issues and key priorities were raised by Aboriginal youth. Delegates called on governments to continue the dialogue by establishing a National Aboriginal Youth Advisory Council.

Taking Pulse Increasing Aboriginal Participation in the Private Sector

On February 6, 2002, Calgary was the scene of a one-day forum organized by the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) that tackled the question: How do we get more Aboriginal people employed and into the workforce?

NAAF members were joined by key stakeholders including former premiers, members of the media, heads of Aboriginal organizations and CEOs of large corporations.

Together, participants grappled with how Aboriginal people can be best equipped to prosper in the current economic climate. The opportunity is there for Aboriginal people to break into the job market. Much of the baby boom generation is retiring and leaving the workforce. At the same time, the Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing segment of Canadian society and will have a working age population of 920,000 by 2006. However, as the NAAF points out, "based on current dropout rates in high school years, few (Aboriginal people) will have the necessary skills to compete for meaningful jobs".

"The fundamental challenge is," as NAAF asserts, "to discover the best ways to unite Aboriginal people with the private sector and increase their participation at all levels of the workforce economy." Participants such as Rick George, President of Suncor Energy Inc. noted, "This is an excellent opportunity for involvement in creating a long-term strategy that will benefit Aboriginal people and indeed the greater economy."

"Employment for Aboriginal people is a national issue – that cannot be solved without the involvement of all levels of government, Aboriginal leaders, youth, educators and the private sector working together."

Hal Kvisle, President and CEO of TransCanada Pipelines.

Participants agreed that in the short term, companies must develop practical policies to advance Aboriginal education and employment with services like a job bank function to serve employers and job seekers. Immediate needs saw support for education to begin at a much earlier age, to help increase graduation numbers for Aboriginal students.

The vision for the future amongst forum participants was to develop a comprehensive approach to education that includes early childhood development, increased parental involvement, higher academic standards, enhanced training for teachers, and a strong partnership with corporate Canada.

Many programs have failed to alleviate the staggering unemployment that hinders Aboriginal communities. Still, it is hoped that by heeding the lessons learned from past successes and failures, positive steps can be taken for the future. NAAF founder John Kim Bell gives his assurance, "We will be acting on today's recommendations and will be acting in concert with other groups, organizations, corporations and government partners to develop specific programs that will suit the 21st century, and offer a hand-up and not a hand-out to Aboriginal people across the country."

Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) is a strong supporter of the Aboriginal Policy Framework. Over the past year, AHRE has established partnerships with Aboriginal communities, industry, other provincial ministries and the federal government to develop training and employment initiatives to increase participation by Aboriginal people in the Alberta economy. Some notable projects have included:

- The First Nations Resource Training Project: Prepared First Nations people for rig hand worker positions in the oil and gas industry.
- The Petroleum Land Administrator Training Project: Prepared First Nations people for land administrator positions in companies like Suncor, Olympia Energy and Utilicorp.
- Lethbridge Aboriginal Employment Centre: This partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, the Metis Nation of Alberta Association and Treaty #7 has opened an Aboriginal Employment Centre serving all Aboriginal people in and around the City of Lethbridge.
- Blackstar Training Project: Provides Aboriginal participants with prequalifications to move into an apprenticeship program. It provides exposure in trades such as welding, carpentry, plumbing, pipefitting and electrician.

More recent projects have involved joint collaborative efforts with organizations such as the Interprovincial Association on Native Employment Inc. (IANE) – Alberta Chapter. A role models directory project recognized that Aboriginal youth need strong role models to demonstrate ways of achieving success. Nominations were collected from various Aboriginal organizations. Each role model is featured with a photo, a mini-biography and advice to Aboriginal youth. Their theme is linked to an AHRE career planning print resource. The role models describe obstacles they



have overcome and give examples of how they contributed to their community. Seekers & Storytellers: Aboriginal Role Models Share Their Career Journeys is available now.

The diversity booklet encourages employers to look at developing a diverse workforce to address skill shortages. Aboriginal people, immigrants, older workers, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and youth are often unemployed, under-employed or not in the labour force despite their skills. This book explains the strong business case for recruiting from this diverse talent pool, and provides strategies and resources to assist employers. Statements from Alberta employers describe the benefits of a diverse workforce. Diversity: A strategy to meet your need for skilled workers will be available in May 2002.

AHRE faces some major challenges in the coming year, particularly with the First Nations community, because of recent changes to the Skills Development Program (SDP). Effective September 1, 2002, AHRE will no longer provide SDP living allowances for First Nations students residing on-reserve. The Department will continue to fund tuition and books for First Nations students living on-reserve. This change is being made because AHRE, through discussions with the federal government, believes the federal government is responsible for providing either education living allowances or social assistance for First Nations people onreserve. Should First Nations people living on-reserve require living allowance support while in training, this support, depending on eligibility, may be sought through their respective Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) holder.

Graduates of the First Nations Resource
Training Project are pictured with (L to
R) MLA Denis Ducharme (Bonnyville Cold Lake), Councillor Eric Gadwa
(Kehewin Cree Nation), Minister Clint
Dunford (Alberta Human Resources and
Employment), Minister Pearl Calahasen
(Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern
Development) and Chief Raymond
Quinney (Frog Lake First Nation) at the
graduation ceremony in Frog Lake.

AHRE is committed to helping First Nations people find and keep jobs. To assist First Nations people living on-reserve to further their skill development and increase participation in the economy, AHRE will support the development of partnerships between Aboriginal people, industry, training providers, the federal government, and AHRE. The money currently being spent in the Skills Development Program for on-reserve living allowances will be reallocated to support these partnerships.

Another challenge will be the continuing quest to collect current Aboriginal labour force statistics so that Aboriginal participation in the economy can be monitored. To accomplish this task, AHRE has recently invested \$1 million in a joint project with Alberta Finance, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Alberta Learning, Alberta Economic Development and Statistics Canada to redevelop the Alberta Labour Force Survey to include Aboriginal data. This threeyear project will go a long way to improving understanding of employment outcomes and prospects for Aboriginal people living off-reserve. This type of information will be very useful to Alberta ministries and Aboriginal communities when planning activities to improve participation by Aboriginal people in the labour force.

For further information contact:

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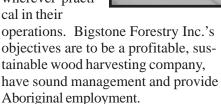
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Bigstone Forestry Inc. Thrives

Bigstone Forestry Inc. is a unique joint venture timber harvesting operation that resulted from the Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. (ALPAC) - Wabasca Desmarais Economic Development Society Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1995.

In that MOU, ALPAC committed to the Bigstone Cree Nation to provide assistance in promoting, developing and utilizing resident businesses wherever practi-



What resulted was an independent business operation in a limited partnership arrangement where ALPAC provided a logging contract and start up management expertise to the project. The Bigstone Cree Nation provided the project funding and Band members were hired to meet the contract requirements of the logging operation. The company is owned equally by ALPAC and nominees of the Bigstone Cree Nation and has an independent board of directors. Financing was arranged by Bigstone Cree Nation through a loan from the Alberta Treasury Branch and an equity grant from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Weyerhaeuser Canada also contracted Bigstone Forestry Inc. to cut logs from its forest management areas.

Start-up expertise and ongoing management came from ALPAC, which seconded an operations manager to the new venture for three years. One of the project goals was to train an Aboriginal operations manager to replace the ALPAC employee.

Since the company cut its first tree at Muskwa Lake on January 5, 2000, it

has not looked back. To date the first 14 employees have exceeded their target and harvested over 120,000 cubic metres of wood. The company has been repaying its loan and enjoys a positive cash flow. All the supporting infrastructure and internal controls for the company are complete and it has been found compliant with a safety and environmental audit.

The benefits of the venture for the Bigstone Cree Nation are long-term work for their experienced members that is close to home, full time and sensitive to community and cultural traditions. The business model provides a good

return on investment and a valuable example of economic co-operation and capacity building. Future plans include expansion in both equipment and employees. There is talk of possible diversification into new opportunities like log hauling and loading and even road construction. Longer term plans focus on providing training opportunities, including youth initiatives and technical and business skills training.

Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries was awarded the 2002 Alberta Business Award by the Alberta Chamber of Commerce for Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice, sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This award of distinction is given to a business that demonstrates outstanding achievements in Aboriginal business, employment and training.

Collaboration is the Key in the First Nations Resource Training Project

The training last September of 49 First Nations people for employment in the oil industry is an excellent example of what can be done when people collaborate for their mutual benefit. This project had support from the Kehewin, Heart Lake,



One of the four groups of students at the training rig site.

Frog Lake and Cold Lake First Nations, industry participation from Precision Drilling, Bona Vista Drilling, Canadian Natural Resources Limited and the Petroleum Industry Training Service (PITS), as well as support from Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Portage College in Lac La Biche.

Contributions included funding and planning support from governments; funding and in-kind services from participating First Nations and industry, including a donated rig and access to an abandoned well site; and experience and enthusiasm from the students. Contributors ensured the candidates in training had the best learning opportunity possible.

Partnership building began a year before the project started. The initial screening of 96 applicants from the four First Nations was done on a co-ordinated basis by human resources people from the Bands and drilling companies involved. The challenges of co-ordinating travel and accommodation, and scheduling the floor hand training in conjunction with the life skills training were overcome with excellent co-operation of organizations and individuals involved.

Arrol Crier, of First Nations Employment Training, was the project co-ordinator. Arrol says the next challenge is to get all of the trained graduates employed in the oil industry. "We accomplished a lot with this project even with the negative impact on the oil industry arising from the events of September 11th. We expect to significantly improve the placement of our graduates in the coming months," he said.

Alberta Prosecutors Experience First Nations Culture

In September 2001, a group of Alberta Crown prosecutors left the courtroom and went to camp. It wasn't an ordinary summer camp. It was a First Nations cultural awareness camp giving 19 Crown prosecutors from across the province a first-hand opportunity to explore First Nations culture, tradition and spirituality.

At the site of the Oldman River Cultural Centre on the Peigan Reserve, the prosecutors participated in traditional First Nation activities and ceremonies, like drumming and the sweat lodge ceremony. They slept in teepees, and ultimately came away with a new appreciation of how the justice system affects Aboriginal people and the many justice issues Aboriginal people face in Alberta.

Michèle Collinson, Assistant Chief Crown Prosecutor in Edmonton, said the camp gave the prosecutors the opportunity to evaluate the way they do business

"We were learning how to play the drums Peigan style and the meaning of music within their culture."

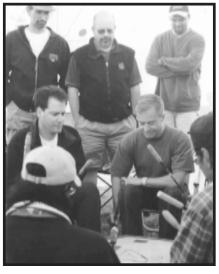
from a completely different perspective. "We left with the understanding that Aboriginal people have a societal structure that should not be ignored," Collinson said. "The camp encouraged us to look for new ways to pursue justice for the Aboriginal community."

Collinson also had rave reviews for Reg Crowshoe, who led most of the sessions during the three-day camp.

Crowshoe believes the training will assist the prosecutors on the job. "They will realize that they need to use cultural understanding to appreciate the person they are working with, and that the person has a whole practice and social concept that is different than their own."

Aboriginal people are over-represented in Alberta's justice system. For example, they represent 36 per cent of the prison population, but only 6 per cent of the total population.

Calgary Crown Prosecutor Gary Cornfield said, while there are no quick solutions to this issue, he left the camp with a new



Crown Prosecutors drum with members of the Peigan Nation. Bart Rosborough, Chief Crown prosecutor from Edmonton and Rob Beck are drumming.

understanding of the issues faced by Aboriginal communities and the will within the community to reduce the number of Aboriginal people in conflict with the law.

On the final day, prosecutors used a traditional consensus building method to create a sacred bundle. "This 'sacred bundle' is a goal that the participants will strive to work toward," Cornfield said. "The goal is to facilitate honest and effective communication among all of the participants in the criminal justice system."

A second camp is scheduled to be held in September 2002.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework

Continued from front cover

school jurisdictions, post-secondary institutions, vocational schools, apprenticeship providers, industry, other key education stakeholders, and government.

• Foster a greater appreciation and understanding by all Albertans of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

The Policy Framework is available on Alberta Learning's website at: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/nativeed/nativepolicy.

Government Business Plan Goal 6

The well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal people will be comparable to that of other Albertans.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

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