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**PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS AT CROWN-FIRST NATIONS
GATHERING**

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): *Au-gee-na-pee*. Bienvenue, mesdames et messieurs. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you on the traditional territory of the Algonquin to this historic Crown-First Nations gathering. And it is especially appropriate to do so in this building.

Un édifice dont le nom honore la mémoire du Premier ministre John George Diefenbaker, l'instigateur des relations de l'ère moderne entre la Couronne et les Premières nations.

A building whose name honours the memory of a Prime Minister who cared deeply about the things we are gathered here to talk about today: respect, rights and opportunity for First Nations Canadians. John George Diefenbaker was, in many ways, the initiator of the modern era of Crown-First Nations relations. It was he who named the first First Nations member to the Parliament of Canada, Senator James Gladstone in 1958, and of course, it was he who, two years later, extended to aboriginal Canadians living on reserves the right to vote in national elections. In addressing that long-

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standing and fundamental injustice, he was a man ahead of his time and in many ways, an apt inspiration for today's proceedings.

Bonjour à vous tous, qui êtes sur place et qui participez d'un bout à l'autre du Canada.

Greetings to all participating here, here in Ottawa, and across the country. His Excellency, Governor General Johnston, and Sharon Johnston, Minister Duncan, Secretary Rickford, Senators and Members of Parliament, distingués invités, elders, chiefs, including, if I might draw special attention to, including Chief Weasel Head and Peter Standing Alone from my home nation, the Blood First Nation of Southern Alberta, and of course, National Chief Atleo. It is in no small part the vision and conception of the National Chief that has led to this gathering today, and I know we all congratulate him for that leadership. (APPLAUSE)

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, hier marquait le sixième anniversaire de l'élection générale dans laquelle les Canadiens et les Canadiennes ont confié, pour la première fois, la direction de notre pays à notre gouvernement.

These past six years have been a time, to put it mildly, of distractions, of elections, of minority Parliaments, and of course world economic and financial crises.

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Malgré cela, notre gouvernement a travaillé fort pour régler des questions qui préoccupent depuis longtemps les membres des Premières nations du Canada. Et je crois que, compte tenu du travail que nous avons accompli ensemble jusqu'à maintenant, nous avons une chance en or de renforcer nos relations et d'offrir des opportunités économiques aux Canadiens et aux Canadiennes d'origine autochtone.

Our government has, nevertheless, through these times worked hard to deal with matters of abiding concern to members of Canada's First Nations. And I believe that as a consequence of our work together thus far, we have exciting opportunities to strengthen our relationships. More than that, such will be the demand for labour in our future economy that we are positioned today to unlock the enormous economic potential of First Nations people and to do so in a way that meets our mutual goals. Canada's growing and vibrant economy will require a skilled and growing labour force in every region: urban, rural and remote. Aboriginal Canadians, aboriginal peoples are Canada's youngest population. It is therefore in all of our interests to see aboriginal people educated, skilled and employed. And there will be no better point in history to ensure that that happens than now. Now, in a moment I will come back to that. First however, I must say this.

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Toute relation a ses hauts et ses bas. Toute relation est marquée par des consensus et des désaccords. Mais je crois que dans toute relation, il est important de mettre l'accent sur les moments forts. Et la relation entre les Premières nations et le Canada en compte plusieurs.

Every relationship has its ups and downs, moments of consensus and of disagreement. I believe it is important to build the narrative of any relationship based on its highest points. In the relationship of First Nations with Canada, there are some very high points. We have, of course, all of the historic treaties, large and small.

Nous avons la première réunion entre le gouverneur Champlain et les autochtones. En effet, la première exemple des relations rassemblement de la Couronne et des Premières nations.

We have the Royal Proclamation of 1763, of which we will mark the 250th anniversary next year, a foundation of the Crown-First Nation relationship. We have, of course, the 200th anniversary this year of the War of 1812, in which aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples joined under the Crown, ultimately laying the basis for a distinct country in the northern half of this continent. And, of course, all the wars since, in which aboriginal people have always fought alongside their fellow Canadians in the defence of freedom

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and democracy here and around the world. There are great things on which to build.

Cela dit, nous devons aussi reconnaître qu'il y a eu des moments moins réjouissants, des moments très difficiles. En réalité, pour des générations, la relation entre nos peuples a été assombrie. Elle a été assombrie en particulier par le fait que des enfants autochtones ont été forcés de fréquenter des pensionnats.

Nonetheless, we must acknowledge the not-so-uplifting moments, some very low points, and the reality that, for generations, the relationship between our peoples was tainted, tainted in a manner that eroded trust and blocked ways forward as does a tree fallen across the road, tainted in particular by the experience of the forced residential schools, the explicit attempt to destroy aboriginal culture and to dismantle the aboriginal family that wounded so many so deeply. That's why one of my most rewarding days in office was when I rose in the House to deliver an apology to those students.

Nous avons reconnu ce triste chapitre de notre histoire. Nous avons répudié le raisonnement qui se trouvait derrière cette période qui a blessé beaucoup de gens profondément.

We acknowledged that sad chapter in our history. We repudiated the thinking that lay behind it. And we went beyond symbolism.

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We took concrete action to settle the claims of those who had been injured. That, ladies and gentlemen, concrete action, has been our election promise to First Nations people in 2004, in 2006, in 2008, again in 2011. And to those commitments, we have been faithful.

En plus des excuses présentées pour les pensionnats et l'accord d'indemnisation, notre gouvernement a aussi, par exemple, accéléré le règlement de plusieurs revendications.

For example, our government has addressed historic grievances by accelerating the settlement of both comprehensive and specific claims. In concert with the Assembly of First Nations, our historic new process has allowed more than 65 specific claims, previously held up for decades, to be dealt with thus far. We have extended the full protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act to First Nations Canadians living on reserve. As Conservatives, we seek to promote the full participation of First Nations in Canada's political and economic life, with all of its rights and responsibilities. And we are dealing with things that have been in the talk shop for 20 years, in some cases longer than that. We are, for instance, about to enshrine... about to ensure that the property of First Nations women and children are protected when relationships end. We have tabled bills to strengthen First Nations

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governance with 21st century rules on elections and transparency. Many First Nations people will say it's about time.

Nous avons versé aux communautés des Premières nations et du Nord plus d'un milliard de dollars dans le cadre du Plan d'action économique.

We routed more than a billion dollars of Economic Action Plan funding to investments for aboriginal and northern communities, using one-time stimulus money to accelerate the building of new homes, and water and wastewater systems, to improve living conditions. And soon, we shall secure water system accountability through legislated standards. In the name of self-government, we've devolved land and resources from Ottawa to Inuvialuit. To protect children, we've brokered six child and family services agreements between Ottawa, First Nations and provincial governments.

Et, bien entendu, nous avons endossé la Déclaration des Nations... Excusez. Nous avons endossé la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones.

And of course, we endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This reaffirms our aspiration and our determination to promote and protect the rights of indigenous people

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at home and abroad. These things we have done, ladies and gentlemen, as a down payment on what we wish to achieve.

Parce que nous visons l'autosuffisance des citoyens et l'autonomie des communautés.

For our goal is self-sufficient citizens and self-governing communities. Our goal is to promote improved governance. Our goal is much increased aboriginal participation in the economy and in the country's prosperity. And we have no illusion about the enormous work that lies ahead of us.

Les actions et les réalisations de notre gouvernement au cours des six dernières années témoignent du sentiment d'urgence qui nous anime. Mais, laissez-moi vous dire ceci : ce n'est qu'un début.

Our government's actions and accomplishments during the last six years speak to our sense of urgency. But, I can tell you this: we have only just begun. In terms of participation, standard of living and quality of life the time has come for First Nations to fully share with other Canadians from all walks of life, with equal opportunity to find the dignity of gainful employment and more than that, the ability to raise a family in the security that comes with it. This is our goal as a government for all Canadians, and where it

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is not working for First Nations, we must act, act aggressively, and act together.

Cela m'amène à parler du Plan d'action conjoint Canada-Premières nations, un plan adopté l'an dernier par le gouvernement du Canada et l'Assemblée des Premières nations. Il s'agit d'une entente opportune, fondée sur des objectifs et des principes communs.

That brings me to the Canada-First Nation Joint Action Plan, agreed last year between the government of Canada, and the Assembly of First Nations. This is a timely understanding based upon common goals and shared principles, principles such as respect and transparency, goals like the empowerment of individuals, strong, sustainable communities, and economic development. I call it timely because, as I said earlier, there has never been a better moment to build on what we have achieved, to move forward, to reset the relationship, to learn from the past, but to focus on the future.

Le Plan d'action conjoint trace la voie à suivre au moyen d'engagements communs, des engagements qui vont changer efficacement les règles régissant les relations au chapitre de l'éducation, de la reddition de comptes, du développement économique, et des traités.

The Joint Action Plan points the way ahead, through specific joint commitments, commitments that will effectively change the rules

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in education, accountability, economic development, and treaty relationships. Why would we wish to change the rules? Because from the rules you set, come the results you get. And the incentives buried in the Indian Act self-evidently lead to outcomes that we all deplore. To be sure, our government has no grand scheme to repeal or to unilaterally re-write the Indian Act. After 136 years, that tree has deep roots. Blowing up the stump would just leave a big hole. However, there are ways, creative ways, collaborative ways, ways that involve consultation between our government, the provinces, and First Nations leadership and communities, ways that provide options within the Act, or outside of it, for practical, incremental and real change.

Voilà notre approche : remplacer certains éléments de la Loi sur les Indiens par des dispositions et des procédures plus modernes, en partenariat avec les provinces et les Premières nations. C'est une approche qui s'est déjà révélée prometteuse. Et certaines Premières nations ont déjà fait des progrès remarquables.

So that will be our approach, to replace elements of the Indian Act with more modern legislation and procedures, in partnership with provinces and First Nations. It's an approach that has already shown promise. With inspired leadership, energy and enterprise, some bands have already shown that First Nations people are as quick to prosper, as capable of

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excellence and as able to enjoy all that Canada's vibrant economy has to offer. I think of BC's Haisla First Nation, partners in the massive Kitimat LNG project that will deliver training, employment and rich economic and social benefits to the community for decades to come. Or the White Cap Dakota First Nation, who under the First Nations Land Management Administration have almost zero unemployment. Or the Alberta First Nations, whose band-owned companies do hundreds of millions of dollars a year in business with oil sands producers, employing thousands of aboriginal people in skilled, high-paying jobs. Or in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Miawpukek First Nation, which has developed a unique job creation program for unemployed community members, operating in surplus despite having few revenue sources of their own.

Ou au Québec, la Première nation d'Essipit a su développer ses industries en tourisme et dans la pêche commerciale, créant la pêche... créant ainsi des emplois locaux et des partenariats tant avec le privé qu'avec les municipalités voisines. Je pense que nous pouvons faire encore plus que ce que nous imaginons ou croyons possible en ce moment.

However, none of us, not governments, not First Nations communities, not aboriginal individuals can accomplish these things alone or without the others. In past conversations, we've talked about symbolism and

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respect and trust. Certainly, in the past, lack of trust on both sides has held us back. But this is a new day. New generations are arising, generations that seek a common vision, that have common goals.

Et la plus grande marque de respect que nous pouvons présenter aux hommes et aux femmes des Premières nations c'est de leur fournir les outils dont ils ont besoin, de leur reconnaître les capacités nécessaires, et de leur permettre d'aller de l'avant.

And the greatest respect that we can show to First Nations men and women is to provide them with the tools they need, with the credit... credit them with the capacity, and then allow them to move forward... We all need to move forward. So let us be willing partners. Let us renew the conversation. I look forward to the outcomes of your deliberations. *Eek-so-ka-pit*. Merci beaucoup, mes amis. Thank you, friends. (APPLAUSE)

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