

Speaking Notes for the Statement of Chief Ghislain Picard
Press Conference
November 8 2007
Montréal

Greetings,
Acknowledgement of the press

Last year, at this time of year, we were gathered in the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh for the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum; a gathering, which several interveners and commentators described as "historic". At the time, my views at the opening of the Forum were that "in order for this Forum to be historic, concrete actions and outcomes were required to take on the true MEANING of historic. That was the challenge that I had launched to all. All parties had their own responsibilities: the First Nations, the government of Quebec, the government of Canada and the civil societies (Aboriginal and from Quebec), and these responsibilities must be assumed.

One year later, I can proudly state that the First Nations did assume their responsibilities. I can salute valuable actions on the part of the Quebec civil society. During the past year, we have developed several new alliances and we have received the support of a significant number of groups from the province of Quebec. We feel a true motivation in getting to know us better and in establishing with us, relations which allow the First Nations to play an enhanced role within the Quebec society. It looks very promising for the future.

However, I have very little to say on the actions of the government.

Yet, we warned them about the urgency to change things around.

One year after the Socioeconomic Forum, the positive and concrete actions of the governments of Quebec and Canada, are still a long time coming. But we can't wait any longer. No matter what the governments think and say, we have initiated the process for a change. We will assume our responsibilities and take all necessary and useful measures to develop our governments, governments of the First Nations, which will be able to make decisions to ensure a better future for our peoples.

Today, I am announcing that the First Nations of Quebec will be more and more present on the political scene. The AFNQL has developed a political platform which will guide a series of actions aimed at provoking an in-depth modification of relations with the governments of Canada and Quebec. The First Nations are essential to the future of Quebec; the governments must take good note of that, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Our own political platform, our own political actions, because we are fed up of waiting. From now on, we will take the necessary actions in order to put in place the conditions which will allow for a true peaceful coexistence between the First Nations and the governments; we will distance ourselves from the current status quo, which is unacceptable.

The platform of the AFNQL is based on four fundamental elements:

- 1) the recognition of the First Nations governments ;
- 2) the conclusion of territorial, tax-related and financial accords ;
- 3) the replacement of the *Indian Act* by a government-to-government relation ;
- 4) the implementation of the First Nations action plan

We know what the problems are, we know what is at stake and we know the solutions. We can initiate the change at several levels. This is what we are doing and a real revolution is beginning for our peoples, a revolution focused on the youth, on the future of our nations.

Thank you.