

June 21, 2012

June 21st is National Aboriginal Day, a day recognizing and celebrating the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. Setting aside a day for Aboriginal peoples is part of the wider recognition of Aboriginal peoples' important place within the fabric of Canada and their ongoing contributions as First Peoples.

I am using the day to celebrate the important contribution of Aboriginal People to the development of the Canadian economy and the Nation as a whole. From the moment the First Europeans arrived in North America, there was an engagement with the First People of this continent, often with the “new comers” being dependent for their survival on alliances and trade of products and services with Aboriginal People. From first contact through the fur trade, Aboriginal People played a significant role in the development of Canada for hundreds of years after European settlement.

Today, the future of Canada is again bound to the future of Aboriginal People, specifically our youth. As the fastest growing demographic group in the country, our youth carry the great potential to succeed and to make their own significant contributions to Canada's future and its economy.

Take some time to learn a bit more about Aboriginal People in Canada. As a start, I would recommend the following sources of interesting perspectives on the historical contributions and the future opportunities for Aboriginal engagement in our Canadian economy.

- http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/firstnations - This multimedia tutorial focuses on the histories of Canada's First Nations peoples from ancient times to the nineteenth century.
- Saul, John Ralston; *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*; Penguin Books (2008) – An interesting look at the influence of Aboriginal People on the social, economic and political development of Canada.
- <http://indspire.ca/> - Indspire (formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation) focuses on the education and motivation of Aboriginal youth.

All the best to you on June 21st, National Aboriginal Day.