



# BUILDING ON SUCCESS

A National Conversation on First Nation Self-Government

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## BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

An examination of the new intergovernmental relationships between the parties and what is needed to ensure a successful working relationship is in place.

## SPEAKING NOTES FOR CATHERINE CONSTABLE

There is a danger that the paradigm of the last 40 years, if unexamined and unchallenged, will conspire to shape the intergovernmental relationships that are emerging with self-government. Characteristics of that paradigm include the contentiousness of negotiations, lingering anger over the treatment of aboriginal people under the Indian Act, and the short term horizons (election-to-election) in which all governments (but especially non-aboriginal governments) operate.

To avoid perpetuating that form of relationship, it may be helpful to think about the new intergovernmental relationships as though they are a marriage. The parties to land claim and self-government agreements can ask themselves the following questions:

1. What kind of (intergovernmental) relationship do you want?
2. What does “success” look like?
3. Are you (and/or your government) behaving in a manner that will achieve the kind of relationship you want?

These questions can be asked for any of the self-government arrangements that exist across Canada... and by any participant, whether at the political, officials, community or societal level (individuals can express their views to leaders and hold them accountable).

It is more likely that these questions can be answered “with one voice” by the aboriginal party than by either the province/territory or Canada-on-behalf-of Canadians. Aboriginal communities are smaller in scale and more culturally cohesive than “Yukoners” or “Canadians”. Recollect that “Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow” was authored by Yukon Indian People, the only party that spoke with one voice at the outset of the negotiation process in the Yukon.

Aboriginal people are also more likely to take a long-term view in considering those questions because of their concern for future generations – as compared to the short-term paradigm in which federal/provincial/territorial governments operate.



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Thus, aboriginal governments are better positioned than other governments to be able to develop a vision, in response to those questions, of what they would like the emerging intergovernmental relationships to look like and of how to achieve them. With “Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow”, Yukon First Nations led Canada and Yukon to negotiate agreements that include an unprecedented form of aboriginal self-government. Similarly, aboriginal people have the potential to lead the way in establishing a new form of intergovernmental relationship that is more sustainable and effective for the long term than the current one rooted in a history that self-government will eclipse.