



ONTARIO COALITION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Representing the rights' and interests of Metis, Non- Status and Status living off Reserve in Ontario

January 2, 2019

Office of Premier
Legislative Bldg, Queens Park, Toronto
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Ontario Coalition of Indigenous Peoples
867 St. Laurent Blvd
Ottawa, ON
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Dear Hon. Premier Ford

We wish you a Happy New Year and continued success as the Premier of Ontario.

I am the Chief of the Ontario Coalition of Indigenous Peoples ("OCIP") which is the Ontario affiliate of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples ("CAP"). CAP is the national voice for Indigenous people living off reserve since 1971.

OCIP constituents are Metis, Status and Non Status Indians living off reserve in Ontario. Statistics show about 85% of Indigenous people live off reserve.¹

Ontario is also home to the largest number of Indigenous people in Canada.² Many live in major centres. In Toronto there is a significant Indigenous population with current estimates ranging from 45,000 to 73,000.³ We think the actual numbers are higher.

Large populations of off reserve Indigenous people live in other major centres like Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury etc. and in smaller communities throughout the Province. Off reserve Indigenous people live in every Provincial riding.

Off reserve people are the most disadvantaged of all Canadians. A recent study of off reserve Indigenous people in Toronto made the following grim conclusions:⁴

64 per cent of respondents were single, compared to 28 per cent of all adults in Ontario.

¹ Refer to "One in Six Aboriginal People Lived on Reserves"
<https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-10.html>

² Refer to "The Aboriginal Population Across Canada" in above report

³ <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2018/01/24/census-vastly-undercounts-indigenous-population-in-toronto-study-says.html>

⁴ <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/02/28/report-says-indigenous-people-in-toronto-are-far-more-likely-to-be-homeless-unemployed-and-hungry.html>



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Only 57 per cent have a high school diploma compared to 90 per cent of adults in Ontario.

63 per cent were unemployed compared to the 7 per cent average in Ontario.

87 per cent live below the before-tax low-income cut-off, where a family generally spends 70 per cent or more of its income on food, shelter and clothing.

More than a third were precariously housed or experiencing homelessness at the time of the survey, with more than half having moved at least once in the past year.

One quarter reported they sometimes or often do not have enough to eat.

The socio-economic situation impacts the health of Indigenous people as well as the local community as a whole. Public institutions, and not for profits, try to manage the symptoms but the root problem remains and may be getting worse.

Status, and some Non Status, Indians are represented by their bands and about 15% of Metis are represented by the Metis Nation Ontario.⁵ Many of the remaining 85% of off reserve Indigenous people have no representation.⁶ This leaves them isolated and alone.

On December 5, 2018 a momentous change occurred when the Federal government signed a political accord with CAP.⁷ With the new accord we hope OCIP can fill the gap and help improve the lives of off reserve Indigenous people. But we cannot do it alone. We need your help.

At the moment we have little or no money but we have a good group of motivated people. The dire situation of off reserve Indigenous people requires immediate action and we hope better tools and resources will come our way in time.

You can help us immediately by introducing us to all the MPPs in your party. If you saw fit, an endorsement of support would go a long way. It will help open doors.

⁵ Wikipedia reports the MNO has a "centralized registry of over 17,000 MNO citizens"
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Métis_Nation_of_Ontario

⁶ Ontario accounts for 20.5% of the total Metis in Canada of 587,545 which is 120,446. Since the MNO have 17,000 members the non MNO Metis total 103,446 or about 85% of the total Metis in Ontario.
<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/10/25/ontario-now-home-to-canadas-largest-mtis-population-census-shows.html>

⁷ http://www.o-cip.ca/files/7115/4525/9712/Scanned_Signed_PA_EN.pdf



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A relationship plan between your government and OCIP will help a lot. Assigning specific individuals to work with us in each Ministry will make the process more efficient and effective. OCIP priorities include:

Housing

Health

Education

Culture

Language

Skills training

Economic development

We also have goals for OCIP including policy and process initiatives for:

Membership guidelines

Financial policies and procedures

Capacity building

Community outreach

Community development

We were pleased to learn of the appointment of former Chief Clifford Bull as the province's special advisor on Indigenous affairs. We understand he is tasked with serving as a liaison between you and Minister Rickford with Indigenous communities. This is an important role and we look forward to starting a relationship with former Chief Bull as soon as possible.

We also need help to remove barriers at the Township and County levels. We understand the complexity, and challenges, your government has in working with local governments. What is most helpful is a letter of introduction, and support for the accord, sent to all Township and County governments and School Boards.



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These two steps put some gas in our tank and help us start a process to improve the socio-economic situation of our constituents. We will start immediately to develop respectful and productive relationships with all levels of government.

We hope you can see your way to help us on the road to respectful partnerships with governments and appreciate any help you can provide.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RS', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ron Swain
Chief, OCIP

c.c.

Minister Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Mines, Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs

Former Chief Clifford Bull, Special advisor on Indigenous Affairs

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Nation Chief Robert Bertrand