



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **Atlantic Aboriginal People Strengthening their Partnership with Region's Universities**

### **Conference will Highlight Traditional Knowledge and Teachings from Elders**

Moncton, New Brunswick (March 17, 2011) - Individuals and organizations dedicated to Aboriginal economic development in Atlantic Canada are gathering in Moncton this week as part of the continued implementation of the *Atlantic Aboriginal Economy Building Strategy*. The “*Let’s All Help Each Other Conference on Aboriginal community based Research*” will explore best practices and lessons learned for working collaboratively with Elders, and current research will be shared. There will also be Elder-led workshops and sharing circles, and recommendations from these sessions will be used to guide a future vision for conducting Aboriginal community based research.

During the conference, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed between the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) and twelve universities through the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP). Historically, Aboriginal people have experienced barriers in accessing post-secondary education and research opportunities and this unique partnership is an innovative approach in the Atlantic region for all involved. The signing of the MOU, the first of its kind in Canada, is a significant achievement in the Atlantic region and it will help support long-term collaboration and capacity-building in economic development research.

APCFNC Co-Chair, Chief Morley Googoo, says, “This agreement is a demonstration of the universities commitment to Aboriginal progress in the area of research and knowledge-building and will help further the transformation from dependence to self-determination for our people.” He adds, “With this partnership, our current relationships will be nurtured and pave the way for a long-term partnership with mutual benefits for the universities as well as Atlantic Aboriginal communities.”

Robert Campbell, President, Mount Allison University and Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities said “It is such a great pleasure for me to represent my colleagues from across the AAU in the signing of this MOU. Our commitment today toward greater collaboration and cooperation will help ensure the future economic success of First Nations communities across the region.”

The three-day conference welcomes over 30 Elders from four Aboriginal cultures of the Atlantic Region - Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, (Maliseet), Innu and Inuit. Atlantic Aboriginal communities recognize the urgency and importance of working alongside Elders and learning from their Traditional Knowledge immediately and doing Aboriginal community-based research. The conference is an important vehicle for the Elders to share knowledge of the languages and their cultures. The debut of “Honouring Traditional Knowledge”, a video made with Elders which highlights the role of Elders and Traditional Knowledge will be shown at the conference. *A full conference itinerary is attached to this release.*

The AAEDIRP is a unique research program formed through partnerships between the 38 member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs (APCFNC), plus the Inuit, 12 Atlantic universities and 4 government funders, both federal and provincial. The APCFNC is a policy research

organization that analyzes and develops culturally relevant alternatives to federal policies that impact on the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu Aboriginal communities and peoples. The AAEDIRP funders include Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, (INAC) the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, (ACOA) the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Aboriginal Affairs, Nova Scotia.

**For more information and to arrange for media interviews**

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Dr. Robert Campbell, President, Mount Allison University and Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities with Mr. John Paul, Executive Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs



Mr. Peter Halpin, Executive Director, Association of Atlantic Universities with Mr. John Paul, Executive Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs



University signatories