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### **Historic Signing at Dene Assembly**

**FORT PROVIDENCE (Wednesday, July 20, 2011)** – Aboriginal leaders in the NWT are providing unprecedented support for the Education Partnership Declaration (EPD), a GNWT initiative spearheaded by Minister of Education, Culture and Employment Jackson Lafferty. The EPD marks the first time Aboriginal leaders have united in such a strong show of support for education.

The EPD was signed by Minister Lafferty, National Chief Bill Erasmus, and the Grand Chiefs at the Dene Assembly last week. This historic signing indicates the importance all Aboriginal leaders attach to the educational success of their people.

“Signing this Declaration with the Grand Chiefs and the National Chief means that we all believe education is the way forward to ensure a healthy future for our people,” said Minister Lafferty, emphasising the importance of the signing in regards to the future of youth and the NWT. “I want to thank the Chiefs for their vision and leadership and for the strength and unity they have showed. Today we have made real progress for our people.”

“This initiative is very important as it demonstrates our commitment towards education and the improvement of our lives in the North,” said National Chief Bill Erasmus. “We encourage everyone to support it and make it real.”

The EPD sets out the guiding principles that all Aboriginal government and education leaders agreed to at a series of regional consultation meetings on Aboriginal Student Achievement (ASA). The ASA initiative is designed to close the education success gap between Aboriginal and other students.

The EPD contains three articles:

Article 1- We recognize that public education aims to achieve quality education for all students and we all have roles and responsibilities for making improvements that will eliminate the gap in education achievement between Aboriginal and other students.

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**Media requests for interviews with Members of the Executive Council may be directed to:**

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Article 2 – We commit to working together and supporting each others’ work to provide a quality education system in the Northwest Territories at the territorial, regional and community levels that will eliminate the gap in education outcomes between Aboriginal and other students.

Article 3 – We agree that the priorities for attention and action that will help eliminate the education achievement gap between Aboriginal and other students are:

- Early childhood and childcare
- Student and family support
- Aboriginal language and culture curriculum and resource development
- Literacy

The EPD will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in August along with the Minister’s ASA Education Plan, a follow up to the ASA Status Report tabled in May ([http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Whats\\_New/ASA%20Interim%20Report%20May%202011%20final.pdf](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Whats_New/ASA%20Interim%20Report%20May%202011%20final.pdf)).

The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Northwest Territories Métis Nation and the Chairs of the Education Authorities and Aurora College will also sign the EPD in the coming weeks, making it the most widely supported education document ever produced.

Photographs in respect of this event are attached and should be attributed to the GNWT.

**For more information contact:**

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