

**STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE ROBERT G. THIBAUT
MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA
Update on fisheries affected by the
Supreme Court's Marshall decision**

August 1, 2002

I am delighted to be here today with Chief Wilbur Dedam and band councillors from Burnt Church to announce that we have reached an agreement in principle on a Comprehensive Fisheries Agreement with the Burnt Church First Nation.

When I was first appointed minister of Fisheries and Oceans last January, I had a number of priorities – but a key personal objective was to seek solutions to avoid the conflict that has characterised our relationship with Burnt Church over the last three years.

I recognised that achieving a resolution would require an approach built on three essential ingredients: **respect, renewal and reconciliation.**

Over the past number of months, we have worked hard with the Chief and Council to overcome past differences and establish a dialogue based on **respect**. And this spirit of cooperation, good will and respect was evident from both sides as we proceeded with discussions during the past fall winter and spring.

The respect and trust that was developed has been a key ingredient in our ability to achieve today's agreement. This agreement will provide for **renewal** of our relationship and hope for the future at Burnt Church.

This comprehensive agreement provides a sound foundation for both fisheries management and economic opportunity at Burnt Church. Key to the agreement, and I think, to the long term economic health of Burnt Church, is the enhanced access to the commercial fishery – particular in the areas of lobster and snow crab. This agreement will support over 100 jobs for Burnt Church members in the fishery. These jobs represent long term sustainable employment for Burnt Church members. To support this and to ensure maximum success and benefits for the community, a training program for Burnt Church fishers will take place this year and next. The agreement also provides support for science research, a guardian program, support for involvement of Burnt Church in the management of the fishery, and community outreach, and other items.

The agreement also provides for the band to conduct a limited food, social and ceremonial lobster fishery in the fall – a fishery that will be monitored cooperatively by my department and Burnt Church. Conservation remains a priority for my department and I believe for all users in the Miramichi Bay area. I believe that this is appropriately reflected in this limited and regulated food fishery.

As Minister, I am very pleased to be part of this positive outcome. I believe that this agreement will benefit the Burnt Church First Nation and support the protection and conservation of the resource. This will benefit all those who depend on the resource for their livelihood in the area.

This agreement is an important achievement, but not an end in itself. A key challenge now is **reconciliation**, the third element of a lasting solution.

We will continue to work with Burnt Church in the implementation of this agreement to further develop our relationship. We also need to support reconciliation in the Miramichi Bay region. I think this agreement provides an important foundation for this work. Aboriginal fishers will be working alongside non-Aboriginal fishers, in the training program and in the general fishery. This only bodes well for future relations among fishers and communities in the Miramichi Bay region.

I am calling on all communities from the Miramichi to turn the page on what has transpired over the last three years – and to commence a new era based on the respect, trust, and friendship that was present when the Acadians and the Mik`maq first met each other close to 400 years ago.

Indeed, if we can take on that challenge in the spirit in which we have worked to date, I am confident of success for Burnt Church, for the fishery, and for the communities at Miramichi Bay.

Chief Dedam, I know that you, your Council, and many people in your community have worked very hard to get to this point. I appreciate the faith that you have shown in taking this important step with us and we all look forward to a productive future.