

Mercredi: "poverty deliberate policy"

by Andrea Buma

TORONTO - Ovide Mercredi, former Assembly of First Nations chief, is urging Native people who are interested in entering into economic partnerships with non-Native businesses to be cautious.

During his keynote address at the recent Economic Renewal Conference in Toronto, Mercredi said, "if you're going to get involved in economic partnerships, you'd better understand who you're dealing with."

He said that there have been many ideas about ways in which to improve the economic and social conditions of Indian people over the years, but that the poverty of Native communities is "not a historical accident."

Mercredi asserted, "the poverty of Native communities is the result of a deliberate policy of the federal government to ensure that our people not be able to gain power. By taking everything, the government has ensured that we cannot support ourselves."

The former chief lamented the fact that the traditional Native economy is not seen as a viable alternative in modern society.

He explained that when he was serving as AFN head he told Parliament if they wanted to help Native people they should make the fishing industry a national priority. He was told that the idea

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