

**Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean
Speech on the Occasion of a Dinner Hosted by the
Governor of Chiapas
Chiapa de Corzo, Tuesday, December 8, 2009**



It gives my husband, Jean-Daniel Lafond, our delegation and me great pleasure to be here with you.

I am delighted to be back in Chiapas, where I stayed during a wonderful journey in my youth, which took me from the north of Mexico to here.

The impressions I kept from that journey come back to me today, just as fresh as they were when they touched the young girl I once was and became etched in my memory as solidly as the stones of ancient monuments that have stood the test of time.

Images that, to borrow the words of the Chiapan poet Jaime Sabines, “blossomed in my eyes like a new light.”

I see that the luminosity and warmth of Chiapas has not changed, and that makes me very happy.

I am delighted to be with you in a region that speaks with incredible and unrelenting power of the great civilizations that existed well before the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

Indeed, I am proud to say again here that those ancient civilizations, whose descendants form the largest indigenous population in the Mexican federation, are just like Canada's First Nations: the Aboriginals, the Inuit and the Métis, our deepest roots on this continent.

To forget that is to wipe away entire sections of humanity's heritage.

But the history of this continent begins with that of these ancient people.

It is a rich, well-documented history that each of us embodies.

We must show the same determination for providing opportunities to the descendants of those who built these majestic remains as we do for taking care of these.

My dear friends, I am anxious to resume the dialogue with Chiapan society that I began during my first visit here.

And we want to hear about your current concerns, your daily challenges, your most pressing aspirations, and your dearest dreams.

The views of the young people, women and men of Chiapas, who are so proud of their ancestral culture and want to sustain it in an intermixed world that is increasingly

open to diversity, are very important to us.

It is in that spirit of solidarity and friendship that we have come to meet with you.

We will never forget the warm welcome you have given us.

And I want you to know, Governor, how very important it was for me to include Chiapas in this State visit to Mexico.

Long live Chiapas, and long live the friendship between our peoples!