

# Phil Fontaine hired as Royal Bank adviser

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[CBC News](#)



*Phil Fontaine waits in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican before meeting with Pope Benedict XVI on April 29, 2009. (Pier Paolo Cito/Associated Press)*

Phil Fontaine, former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has a new job with the Royal Bank of Canada.

Fontaine, 64, from Manitoba's Sagkeeng First Nation, has been appointed special adviser to RBC. He said he will help the company deepen its relationships with aboriginal governments, communities and businesses in Canada.

Fontaine said he will also work closely with the First Nations to increase opportunities for economic development. First Nations can't rely on governments alone for growth and prosperity, he said in an interview with CBC News.

He also intends to champion environmental causes in First Nations communities but his first job will be to promote the torch run for the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver.

"This is an opportunity to convince the aboriginal community as well as [other] Canadians, of course, that the 2010 Olympics is not only a sporting event, it is also an opportunity to celebrate First Nations cultures," he said.

Fontaine, who lives in Ottawa, once served as Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and was instrumental in protecting aboriginal rights and treaty rights in Canada's Constitution.

He moved on to the AFN post in 1997 and served for one term before returning for the 2003 election and winning back the seat. He stepped down this past July.

In June 2008, Fontaine oversaw the historic apology from the federal government for decades of racist policy and abuse in government-funded aboriginal residential schools.

And last April, he and a group of aboriginal delegates travelled to Vatican City and met with the Pope, who expressed sorrow for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the residential schools system.

"We are proud to welcome Phil Fontaine and look forward to benefiting from his wisdom and expertise, gained from a tremendous career as a leader within Canada's First Nations communities," Gordon Nixon, RBC president and CEO, stated in a release.

"Phil Fontaine's guidance will be particularly valuable as we continue our effort to build relationships with aboriginal peoples and communities across the country."

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