

**National Association of Friendship Centres  
275 MacLaren Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K2P 0L9**

**March 19, 2007**

**For Immediate Release**

**Press Release**

**Canada's Largest Aboriginal Service Delivery Partner Responds to Budget**

(March 19, 2007) – Ottawa, Ontario – The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is disheartened that funds are not in this year's budget for Friendship Centres.

*"Friendship Centres will continue to do good work in communities across Canada", stated NAFC President Vera Pawis Tabobondung. "It has been over a decade since the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program has received any enhancements. Local communities need support to maintain our levels of service."*

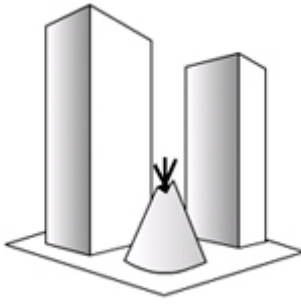
The NAFC have been in discussions concerning enhancements for the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program for over a year. On April 28, 2006 representatives from the NAFC met with Canadian Heritage Minister Bev Oda to discuss the funding pressures. Over the summer NAFC and Canadian Heritage have been working on Sustainability Plan for Friendship Centres. A plan was presented to Minister Oda in November 2006 which called for \$ 31.3 million enhancement over three years. It was hoped that these funds would be provided for in this budget.

*"I will not hide my disappointment", commented Peter Dinsdale, Executive Director. "We have been working very hard over the past year on enhancements for local Friendship Centres. We are going to have to carefully evaluate how we move forward from here."*

The National Association of Friendship Centres is a national Aboriginal organization providing programs and services to 116 Friendship Centres across the country.

Contact:

Peter Dinsdale  
Executive Director  
pdinsdale@nafc.ca  
Work (613) 563-4844 ext. 318  
Cell (613) 327-5270  
www.nafc.ca



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## **Backgrounder**

There are 116 Friendship Centres across Canada, and in many cities, Friendship Centres are the only providers of programs and services to urban Aboriginal residents. For over 50 years, Friendship Centres have been facilitating the transition of Aboriginal people from rural, remote and reserve life to an urban environment. For many Aboriginal people, Friendship Centres are the first locations they visit to obtain referrals to programs and services. Given that the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian urban population, the importance of the network will continue to grow.

The federal government has invested in Friendship Centres for more than 40 years. The long-term sustainability of Friendship Centres requires enhancements to the funding levels that were established a decade ago. While the urban Aboriginal population over the past decade has more than doubled in some cities, funding through Canadian Heritage's Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program (AFCP) to support the core activities of Friendship Centres, has not changed. In order to protect the federal government's investment, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of these institutions, these funding levels need to be examined in the context of today's realities.

In 2006/07, the 116 Friendship Centres across Canada delivered over 1,200 programs and services worth almost \$90 million to over 1,132,000 participants. The entire Friendship Centre Movement delivered almost \$115 million in programs and services. With the \$16.1 million in support for core operations from AFCP, they delivered over \$38 million for federal departments; over \$36 million for provincial/territorial governments; \$6.5 million for municipal governments; and \$5 million for non-governmental and other Aboriginal organizations.

For more information please contact:

Peter Dinsdale  
Executive Director  
email: [pdinsdale@nafc.ca](mailto:pdinsdale@nafc.ca)  
Ph: 613-563-4844  
Cell: 613-327-5270  
Fx: 613-594-3428  
[www.nafc.ca](http://www.nafc.ca)