



National Association of Friendship Centres
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For Immediate Release

The NAFC Challenges the Government of Canada to Address Urban Aboriginal Issues

OTTAWA, November 2, 2007 - The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) welcomes today's remarks by Prime Minister Harper as an explicit commitment to bring greater focus and investment to urban Aboriginal peoples.

"We believe that such a commitment has been long over due and look forward to a continued positive relationship with the Government of Canada", stated NAFC President Vera Pawis Tabobondung. "We have focused our efforts in strengthening the ability of Friendship Centres to respond to the increasing urban Aboriginal population. Investing in the continued sustainability of the 117 Friendship Centres across Canada is a positive step the Government of Canada must take."

The NAFC is concerned about the lack of action this government has shown on urban Aboriginal issues.

"Successive governments have made empty promises to urban Aboriginal peoples", stated Peter Dinsdale, Executive Director. "It is time for action. We are an effective and accountable national Aboriginal organization which has been active providing services to Canada's urban Aboriginal population for over 50 years. We have a demonstrated membership, network and infrastructure, and we look forward to working with this government on effectively serving our clients."

The Friendship Centre Movement's story of success has achieved international recognition at both the UN Expert Group Meeting on Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration in March 23, 2007 in Santiago, Chile and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, May 21, 2007 in New York City which culminated in the Government of Canada stating;

"... the Friendship Centres provide important services to Aboriginal people living in cities across Canada. Moreover, the Friendship Centres paved the way for a number of other programs and initiatives designed by governments to address and respond to the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities."

Friendship Centres are the front-line service delivery agencies that work to strengthen the unique cultural identities of an ever-expanding and heterogeneous Aboriginal community. In essence, considerable support has come from a variety of stakeholders in targeting culturally appropriate services to the urban Aboriginal communities that are served by Friendship Centres.

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is Canada's only urban Aboriginal service delivery infrastructure dedicated to improving the quality of life for Aboriginal Peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, participation in, Canadian society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.

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