



**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES BRINGS
GLOBAL ATTENTION TO THE REALITIES OF CANADA'S URBAN
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

For Immediate Release

UNITED NATIONS, NY, April 30, 2008 – The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) welcomes the opportunity to bring global attention to the current state of Canada's rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population.

Today, NAFC President, Vera Pawis Tabobondung will stand before the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples Issues (UNPFII) in New York City to articulate the struggles, history and successes of the Friendship Centre Movement. Since the 1950's, Friendship Centres have fostered the transition of Aboriginal Canadians to urban communities. Today, over 116 community-based and community-directed Friendship Centres are vital pillars in community development and are fundamental in facilitating social, economic and educational assistance and support.

“Essentially, the Friendship Centre Movement has evolved into a substantial network of service delivery organizations,” said Ms. Pawis Tabobondung. “For more than fifty years, we have successfully provided urban Aboriginal people with the necessary programs and services that respect their unique cultural needs.”

Despite the Movement's history of proven success, there remain critical funding gaps in culturally enhanced programs and services that are available to Canada's urban Aboriginal peoples. This disparity, coupled with the rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population, could cause critical programs and services to collapse under the weight of soaring demands.

As Canada's sole organization responsible for delivering and administering the *Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP)*, the NAFC embraces the UNPFII recommendation that insists:

"...relevant States, in cooperation with the Indigenous peoples concerned, establish Indigenous peoples centres in urban areas to address the medical conditions and provide legal and other forms of assistance."

Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration

"As Indigenous people, it is our responsibility to ensure that a sustainable infrastructure is established to address and respond to the intricate needs of Indigenous peoples in urban areas," said NAFC Executive Director Peter Dinsdale. "This international event will allow us to combine our efforts by sharing best practices, tools, resources and indeed by facilitating dialogue amongst the world's Indigenous peoples, governments, leaders and each other."

This occasion will illustrate our on-going commitment to improving the condition of urban Indigenous people's lives, world-wide, by strengthening the unique cultural identities of the ever-expanding, urban Indigenous communities.

The NAFC represents 116 of Canada's Friendship Centres and their urban Aboriginal membership.

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For more information please contact:

Geraldine King, Communications Officer, NAFC

(613) 563-4844 ext 328 or mobile (613) 296-6234 or gking @ nafc.ca (no spaces)