



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES ASSERTS SOLIDARITY ON THE NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

For Immediate Release

OTTAWA ON, May 28, 2008 – In the spirit of friendship, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) will walk in solidarity on the National Day of Action (NDA) on May 29, 2008 to bring awareness to the current realities facing Canada's urban Aboriginal peoples.

Whether a First Nation, Métis or Inuit person lives on a reserve, in a rural community or in a metropolitan area - it is imperative that the public is aware of the second-rate treatment of Aboriginal peoples. This event will also be an opportunity to remind the federal government of its responsibilities toward Canada's rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population.

"Friendship Centres have been hit particularly hard by federal spending freezes over the last decade," said NAFC President Vera Pawis Tabobondung. "The rapid increase of Canada's urban Aboriginal population coupled with a steady decrease in program dollars has resulted in Friendship Centres having to turn people away who desperately rely upon their services."

In Canada, 71% of Aboriginal people do not live on a reserve. Of that population, 68% live in urban areas. In 2008, Friendship Centres will account for over 1,132,000 client services offered through more than 1200 programs. Despite the

habitual successes of these pragmatic and viable resources for urban Aboriginal peoples, Friendship Centres are repeatedly excluded from substantial federal investment strategies and funding allocations.

The NAFC is calling upon the Government of Canada to partner with us to continue to provide the critical services to Canada's rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population. In 1996, federal funding for the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP) was cut by 25 per cent. Since then, the AFCP has seen no additional dollars, despite inflation and the influx of Aboriginal people to urban centres.

"On May 29th, we will walk in solidarity with those who are genuinely concerned about the well-being of First Nation peoples' lives," said NAFC Executive Director Peter Dinsdale. "The inequities that First Nation people endure are not limited to those living on reserves or in isolated communities. Canadians must be made aware that injustices towards Aboriginal people are occurring in their own back yards."

The National Day of Action will begin tomorrow at 10:00 am on Victoria Island with opening ceremonies, music and dance. This will be followed by a peaceful march to Parliament Hill where a rally will be held. NAFC President, Vera Pawis Tabobondung will deliver remarks at 12:45 pm on Parliament Hill.

More information about the National Day of Action can be found on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) website (www.afn.ca).

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) represents 118 of Canada's Friendship Centres and their urban Aboriginal membership.

-30-

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)