



National Association
of Friendship Centres

Aboriginal Friendship Centres - An Investment in Canada's Prosperity

August 15, 2013

The National Association of Friendship Centres

*A response to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC):
"Developing a Consolidated Approach to Urban Aboriginal Programming:
Discussion Guide"*



Executive Summary

The Government of Canada recently engaged the Aboriginal community in a broad request seeking input on an urban Aboriginal policy and its program components.¹ This document responds to that request by directly addressing the principle question facing policy makers and Aboriginal organizations – how best to increase the prosperity and success of Canada’s urban Aboriginal people.

54% of all Aboriginal people in Canada live in urban areas

In the 1950’s, Friendship Centres were created by urban Aboriginal communities as a means of increasing the prosperity and success of Canada’s urban Aboriginal people. Since this time, Friendship Centres have grown successfully and organically from a modest three centres to 119 centres nationwide. In communities across Canada, Friendship Centres are a hub for social and economic activity. Based on countless successes, the National Association of Friendship Centres believes the single most effective way to support Aboriginal people living in urban environments is to build on existing partnerships by reinvesting in this proven and successful strategy.

As Canada’s original urban Aboriginal strategy, Friendship Centres are building partnerships, seeding innovation,

¹ “Developing a Solid Approach to Urban Aboriginal Programming: Discussion Guide,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, (AANDC).

harmonizing federal, provincial and municipal programs at the community level, building community strength through inclusive programming and policies, and enhancing urban Aboriginal policy and programming while also aligning programs and services to meet the needs on the ground.

As a proven strategy, this discussion paper illustrates how Friendship Centres have not only met, but exceeded the five policy pillars established by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) who have identified the following as core requirements for urban Aboriginal policy going forward:

- Engagement
- Horizontality
- Alignment
- Innovation
- Inclusion

48% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25

Secondly, this document shows how Aboriginal Friendship Centres can continue to play a key role in Canada’s economic recovery, helping to increase the prosperity of urban Aboriginal people. Friendship Centres recognize that, as a primary policy concern, there is a need for the federal government to exercise fiscal restraint. Going forward, Friendship Centres can help maximize public investment

Canada’s Aboriginal Population is growing **6 times** faster than non-aboriginal population.

Aboriginal populations experience **lower education levels, higher unemployment** rates and **lower income levels** than the rest of the urban population.

addressing some of these financial pressures that have come to characterize policy making in Canada. In bridging the gap between the urban Aboriginal labour supply and labour market employment opportunities and by providing core wrap-around social services for this population, this document shows that Friendship Centres remain a sound delivery mechanism for stimulating economic inclusion among Aboriginal people and are a sound investment for public dollars.

As a model for effective service delivery, the Friendship Centre Movement is instrumental in accessing an elusive demographic and have shown to be:

- Fiscally Accountable
- Democratically Governed
- Cost Effective
- Well Run

In utilizing the National Association of Friendship Centre model, policy makers are also provided a much desired

umbrella mechanism with which significant policy discussions can be framed, allowing for the engagement of national, regional and community organizations. The core support supplied through Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP) has also led to a level of sustainability whereby other funders and partners have the confidence to

70% of Aboriginal people live off-reserve

invest in Friendship Centres, this in turn has led to increased stability and funding from other sources. Finally, Friendship Centres have achieved these many successes while also remaining deeply committed to a democratic governance structure and adhering to sound financial management practices. The answer to any urban Aboriginal policy and programming dilemma therefore must include an enhanced focus on and investment in Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

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Estimates hold that for every **\$1** provided by the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP), Friendship Centers leverage **\$8** from other sources.

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Chapter 1 - Meeting and Exceeding Federal Policy Expectation

Introduction

Since its creation in 1972, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) has served as the centralized, coordinating body linking a network of 119 Friendship Centres from coast to coast to coast. The federal government has invested in Friendship Centres for decades. The NAFC understands that the long-term sustainability of Friendship Centres depends upon hard work, accountability and a willingness to meet the policy objectives established by the federal government. To this end the NAFC has much to be proud of.

In the document produced by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) entitled "Developing a Consolidated Approach to Urban Aboriginal Programming", five policy pillars are identified with the intention of framing the dialogue on a federal approach to urban Aboriginal policy and programming. In the following discussion paper the National Association of Friendship Centres, (NAFC) demonstrates how together with Provincial and Territorial Associations (PTAs), Friendship Centres have met and exceeded all five policy expectations.

The five fundamental guidelines outlined in the AANDC document include:

- **ENGAGEMENT:** Broad based engagement of Aboriginal communities and other key stakeholders.
- **HORIZONTALITY:** Connecting and coordinating federal efforts across departments.
- **ALIGNMENT:** Coordinating efforts and investments with provinces and municipalities to maximize reach and impact.
- **INNOVATION:** Shaping federal policies and programming to respond to community priorities, not vice versa;

maintaining flexible authorities and funding to fill gaps and respond to opportunities, and; to support socially innovative partnership approaches.

- **INCLUSION:** Inclusive to all Aboriginal peoples in an urban setting (i.e. not a distinctions or rights-based approach).

1. Engagement

Friendship Centres have proven their ability to establish strong local, regional and national networks serving as a hub for the provision of labour market programs and services in 119 urban locations across Canada. Sitting at the crossroads of a number of important forces in the Canadian labour market including provincial, territorial and municipal governments, trade unions, and educational and other training institutions, Friendship Centres are uniquely positioned to engage broadly with a variety of stakeholders.

One crucial element for their success has been Friendship Centres' ability to develop and form deep and lasting partnerships with private industry and with other service delivery organizations. This has ensured that Friendship Centres labour market programming remains responsive to labour market demand and that training is linked directly to jobs and careers. Year after year, Friendship Centres have employed increasing numbers of urban Aboriginal people while also increasing their participation within the economy.

2. Horizontality

Through coordination efforts, analytical work and policy development, Friendship Centres continue to forge strong, national partnerships with federal departments. These services range from Justice (89 Justice programs are offered by Friendship

The Halifax Career Connections Centre has been so successful because it has built extensive partnerships with local employers including trade unions. At the outset, the Micmac Friendship Centre conducted a needs assessment survey of over 300 employers in the region to help match employers' labour demand with the Aboriginal labour supply.

The Micmac Native Friendship Centre in Halifax has sought meetings with private employers like Bell, and met with companies involved with major projects across the province. Further, they've had initial meetings with the Bricklayers Union, Construction Council and the Ironworkers Union to explore further trades training opportunities.

Centres across the country) to Housing (51 Housing programs offered by Friendship Centres across the country). Friendship Centres have worked with federal partners on a number of program delivery services including Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada, (PHAC). In promoting healthy lifestyles, Friendship Centres have teamed up with federal partners to save public dollars, offering programs such as smoking cessation, prenatal health services, HIV/AIDS services and drug and alcohol use and counselling. Approximately 23.5% of Friendship Centre funding is directed to health initiatives.

The NAFCs ongoing efforts to connect Aboriginal youth with summer employment has led to its participation with the Young Canada Works program (YCW), to better equip Aboriginal youth with the tools needed to succeed in the Canadian economy. This is in addition to a myriad of other initiatives related to Education and Economic Development and various federal partnerships.

The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is the only Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) agreement holder in the Friendship Centre Movement and accounts for approximately \$6.4 million of total HRSDC funding, delivering employment and training programming through 26 Friendship Centre delivery sites in Ontario alone.

Notwithstanding the OFIFC ASETS, the remaining national Friendship Centres serve over 11,000 clients with just over \$4.25 million in HRSDC-related funding. Friendship Centres have built upon this HRSDC-related funding through unique and creative partnerships with provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, colleges, universities, school boards, other social services organizations and local Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) holders.

3. Alignment

In 2011/12, Friendship Centres across Canada delivered over 1,493 programs and services to over 2.6 million client contacts on a status blind basis – that is, equally to status and non-status First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal people. Furthermore, the entire Friendship Centre Movement delivered over \$125 million in programs and services to Canada's rapidly increasing urban Aboriginal population. With \$16.1 million in support for core operations from the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program, Friendship Centres delivered over \$37 million for federal departments; over \$39 million for provincial/territorial governments; \$4.5 million for municipal governments; and \$4 million for non-governmental and other Aboriginal organizations.²

Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs) help manage the delivery of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP) within their respective regions. Since provinces have jurisdiction over the majority of policy and programming "levers" (ie: education, training, health, social housing, etc.), provinces are critical partners in any approach to address urban Aboriginal issues. Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs) emerged as a direct recognition by Friendship Centres of the need for sustained provincial engagement and strategic coordination of province-wide Friendship Centre activity.

The NAFC is also very much aware of the fact that municipalities contribute greatly to the quality of life in Canada. Municipalities build strong, sustainable communities across the country through housing and policing programs and other local services. In providing an effective mechanism for elevating the concerns expressed at the local to the national level, the NAFC remains uniquely positioned to cultivate and further strengthen relationships with provincial and municipal governments across Canada.

² *Friendship Centres and the UAS: A Way Forward. July 2013 – Prepared by the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres*

In Val d'Or similar success rates were achieved together with their provincially-funded Aboriginal Youth in Action program. Since 2008, nearly 85% of all past participants were either still employed or successfully continuing follow-up employability actions three months after the program.

4. Innovation

In many respects, Friendship Centres are a hub for innovation within urban Aboriginal communities. In British Columbia, together with government and private sector partners, Friendship Centres are experimenting with Social Impact Bonds, a relatively new method of funding and delivering social services. Using Social Impact Bonds, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) will test the success of culture-based employment programs in a specified number of BC Friendship Centres. These Centres will be pilot sites for implementing an employment based intervention with the goal of testing whether the intervention leads to meaningful employment. This intervention would be tested for a period of five years while establishing a control group that will be monitored over the course of that time. The overall goal is to test whether a specific intervention leads to the attainment and retention of meaningful employment for Aboriginal people living off-reserve.

BCAAFC is also leading the charge in innovation across a number of other fronts, from spearheading a province wide effort to advance the Aboriginal non-profit workforce, to gathering over 1,500 youth from across the country for an educational and culture based annual youth conference, called "Gathering Our Voices".

Friendship Centres work with Aboriginal peoples on all aspects of service design and delivery. Some Centres work directly with their clients' First Nation Bands to fund training. For example, the Employment Services team at Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society in British Columbia worked with the Indian Brook First Nation in Nova Scotia to split-fund Heavy Equipment Operator Training with Class 1 Truck driver training.

In preparing for 2020, one of the NAFC's primary policy goals is to ensure that over 400,000 Aboriginal youth are ready for the labour market.

The Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre in Thompson, Manitoba is just one example of a Centre that successfully aligns multiple departmental priorities to deliver effective programming. As a recipient of federal, provincial and municipal funds across the health, education, family services and employment portfolios, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre delivers cradle-to-grave services in a seamless manner that best meets the needs of their members and clients.

5. Inclusion

All Friendship Centres are proudly 'status blind' meaning they provide services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people alike, without discrimination. The 119 locations provide labour market services while remaining deeply engaged with urban Aboriginal youth and mentorship. Friendship Centres have an open door policy allowing individuals to access programs and services regardless of paid membership fees. These services can be accessed equally by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike.

To the NAFC, the concept of 'status blind' includes non-discrimination on the basis of age. In taking seriously our responsibility to our communities, the Friendship Centre Movement has focused on youth engagement as a key policy focus, ensuring the stability of youth-focused initiatives. Friendship Centre youth engagement programs are helping Aboriginal youth play an increasingly important role in connecting with labour markets, providing the support to help youth to take advantage of employment opportunities that lead to jobs and to meaningful careers.

Aboriginal peoples, with the right supports, will be well positioned to help fill the labour force gap and assist in building a vibrant Canadian economy (Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2009)

By 2020, the NAFC has set a goal of ensuring that over 400,000 Aboriginal youth will be ready for the labour market. This has been of paramount importance. Friendship Centres have the experience and capacity to encourage Aboriginal youth to complete high school, access post-secondary education, skills and job training. Friendship Centres provide an environment that is trusted, safe, and effective, ensuring that urban Aboriginal youth are prepared, trained, and educated for participation in the economy. Ultimately, they provide the support network and a set of values that allow urban Aboriginal people to tackle the complexities of urban participation.

Chapter 2 - 50 Years Of Measurable Policy Outcomes

Introduction

Discussed below are five key achievements of which the Friendship Centre Movement is particularly proud. These achievements demonstrate how Friendship Centres have concretely altered the urban Aboriginal experience and some of the many areas in which Friendship Centres have conformed to the policy objective of our federal partners.

The first key to the success of the Friendship Centre Movement over the past 50 years has been our emphasis on self-reliance and community-based problem solving. Secondly, over the years, Friendship Centres have evolved into more than a gathering place for urban Aboriginal community, becoming instead a hub for innovation. Thirdly, in moving Aboriginal people along the wellness spectrum, Friendship Centres are creating the foundations for full employment and employment retention. Fourthly, the core support supplied through the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP), has led to a level of sustainability wherein other funders and partners gain the confidence to invest in Friendship Centres. This in turn has led to increased stability and funding from other sources. Finally, Friendship Centres continue to improve the quality of life for countless Aboriginal people by providing a safe, stable environment for urban Aboriginal people to gather and access a variety of programs and services showing how, in a very real way, Friendship Centres have the power to change lives.

1. Our People, Our Solutions

The concept and need for a “Friendship Centre” originated in the mid-1950s to meet an historic demographic shift as noticeable numbers of Aboriginal people began moving to larger urban areas of Canada. This shift was primarily motivated by a search for an improved quality of life, including a wish to access education and employment opportunities. This growth continued and even accelerated in the last two decades. During this period, the urban Aboriginal population doubled from 392,335 in 1996 to 786,350 in 2011. Today,

Aboriginal Friendship Centres are the country’s (and the world’s) most significant off-reserve Aboriginal service infrastructure system.

The dedicated men and women working in Friendship Centres have long recognized the need for specialized services to help Aboriginal newcomers to the city. Aboriginal people, no matter what their age or cultural background, often face unique obstacles to integration in urban centres. This has included uncoordinated services funded through narrow mandates, discrimination, poverty, inadequate education, and poor housing, to name only a few. As demand for services increased by urban and relocating First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, so too did the number of Friendship Centres.

Today, over half a century later, the Friendship Centre Movement has expanded and continues to offer essential programs and services to urban Aboriginal people in Canada and is recognized internationally as a unique and successful model and a core source of expertise on urban Aboriginal issues

In the last two decades the overall urban Aboriginal population has doubled from 392,335 in 1996 to 786,350.

This rate of growth has far out-paced all other Canadian population growth rates, making the urban Aboriginal population the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. Today there are significant urban Aboriginal communities in some of Canada’s largest urban centres. Notably, 26% of Canada’s total Aboriginal population live in just nine cities: Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, Saskatoon, Ottawa, Montreal and Regina.

Today over half a century later, the Friendship Centre Movement has expanded and is recognized internationally as a unique and successful model and a core source of expertise on urban Indigenous issues.

2. Social and Economic Innovation/Partnership

Ever since Aboriginal people began moving off-reserve Friendship Centres and Provincial Territorial Associations have served as hubs for innovation. Friendship Centres have used innovative tactics to develop programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in urban communities; they have been instrumental in finding and building strategic partnerships particularly with respect to the labour market and enhancing skill development.

Example 1: The Cariboo Friendship Society in Williams Lake, British Columbia, has proven that, through social innovation, Centers can achieve client-centered success with a focus on employment and training in social innovation. Leveraging experience gained at Friendship Centres, 12 individuals received crucial career certifications and developed the necessary business and financial skills to start their own painting/contracting business. They soon won contracts to paint a local school and police station, eventually extending their client base to the surrounding towns of Quesnel and 100 Mile House. Without the Friendship Centre-led, hands-on and socially-minded model, these 12 people would not have had the opportunity to acquire employment skills or the long-term economic resiliency needed to start their own painting business.



For each dollar provided by the AFCP, Friendship Centres generate \$8 dollars from other sources.

Example 2: Val d'Or's Economic Development sector oversees the activities of the arts and crafts boutique, food services, hostel and rental services, and various other financing projects. This sector generates approximately \$1M in annual revenue, employs 20 people and is noted as being the largest employer of Aboriginal people in Val d'Or.

Example 3: Friendship Centres have also worked to develop and maintain relationships with ASETS holders. The basis for most of these relationships is third-party funding to deliver employment and training services in urban areas on behalf of the ASETS holder.

3. Improving Wellness Toward Full Employment

Aboriginal people represent the fastest growing population in Canada. At present approximately 70% of Canada's Aboriginal population live off-reserve. In combination with rapidly increasing urbanization rates, Friendship Centres remain a critical piece of the urban Aboriginal equation. Faced with the reality of labour shortages, falling birth rates among non-Aboriginal Canadians and a large "baby boomer" generation rapidly approaching retirement age, Friendship Centres recognize that urban Aboriginal populations represent an opportunity to address these pressing demographic issues.

As the original urban Aboriginal strategy, Friendship Centres play an essential role in facilitating the type of training and education services required to provide a vital link between the urban Aboriginal labour force and the job market.

Urban Aboriginal people are ideally positioned to help fill the labour force gap and assist in building a vibrant Canadian economy. As a democratically governed and 'status blind'

Canada cannot have a jobs strategy without supporting Aboriginal people to retain those jobs.

organization, it stands to reason that Friendship Centres will become even more crucial in the coming decade.

When it comes to increasing participation in the economy and saving public dollars over the long term, the Friendship Centre model is a proven model. At a time of skilled labour shortages throughout many sectors of the Canadian economy, there remains simultaneous under-employment of the Aboriginal workforce and particularly Aboriginal youth in Canada. Combined with falling birth rates and a large "baby boomer" generation already reaching retirement age, there is an opportunity for Aboriginal people to fully engage and participate in the Canadian social and economic worlds. For their part, Friendship Centres have been on the forefront of this type of inclusion effort.

Friendship Centres have delivered over 50 years worth of labour market programming by focusing on their unique strengths. One of these traditionally has been Friendship Centres' ability to develop and sustain deep and lasting partnerships with private industry and with other service delivery organizations. This has ensured that Friendship Centre labour market programming remains responsive to labour market demand and that training is linked directly to jobs and careers.

More than this, Friendship Centres support Canada's urban and off-reserve Aboriginal population by helping participants develop the economic resiliency to do more than just find work, but to build careers through the following strengths:

- Providing a continuum of supports to help the whole person;
- Providing service to all, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal,

regardless of race, status or band affiliation;

- Allowing youth to lead;
- Developing community economic resiliency through social enterprise;
- Developing and maintaining effective governance structures and;
- Maintaining accountability, professional standards and reporting structure.

4. Core Federal Support is a Source of Confidence for Others

Friendship Centres are provided with sustained funding through the core support of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program, (AFCP). This has resulted in a high level of confidence which in turn has attracted numerous new partners and private funders.

Stable funding allows for numerous departments and for various levels of government to respond to the needs of the individual communities. It provides a base level of support to the NAFC and the PTAs. For each dollar provided by the AFCP, Friendship Centres generate an estimated 8 dollars from other sources.³

Together with NAFC's own fundraising efforts, which have succeeded in collecting considerable amounts of funding, the federal government has continuously invested in the NAFC,

One crucial element for success has been the Friendship Centres ability to develop and form deep and lasting partnerships with private industry and with other service delivery organizations.

It is worth noting that while the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP) provides core funding for Friendship Centres' for their daily operations and to cover basic operational costs, AFCP funding allocations do not cover the rising cost of rent, utilities, building maintenance etc. There have been no increases to AFCP funding allocations. In fact, in 1996, allocations were cut drastically by 25%.

helping Friendship Centres become an integral part of Canada's urban infrastructure. In turn, the NAFC have proven themselves fiscally accountable, committed to the principals of democratic governance and year after year, accountable to the federal government.

Over the long-run, the NAFC has successfully administered AANDC programming and has done so at a reduced administrative cost to the government. As a third party administrative delivery vehicle, the NAFC offers the federal government several efficiencies in the administration of national programs.

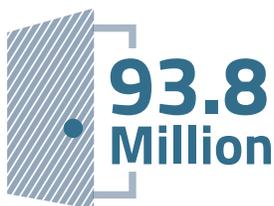
The delivery of programs and services through a network of community-based and community-directed organizations, such as Friendship Centres, enables the federal government and other partners to achieve substantial returns for their financial investments and saves significant costs by using Friendship Centres for the delivery of programs and services to urban Aboriginal people.

One example is Canadian Heritage's former Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre Initiative (UMAYC). It cost the federal government \$16,000 to administer and deliver a UMAC project; by contrast it costs the NAFC \$10,200 per project. This represents over 25 percent savings to the federal government.

Another example is the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres which receives \$70,000 towards its administration costs from the ACFP funding. It in turn is able to generate over \$1.3 million towards its administrative and management costs from other government sources - almost 15 times the level of funding it receives from ACFP.

The NAFC has not only successfully administered the AANDC programs over the long term – it has done so at a reduced administrative cost and burden to the government. As a third party administrative delivery vehicle, NAFC offers the federal government several efficiencies in the administration of national programs.

Funding 16.1 million enables \$93.8 million in programming possible.



5. Safe, Stable Environments for a Better Quality of Life

For many Aboriginal people, Friendship Centres are the first point of contact for programs and services in the city. With a mandate to provide tools for Aboriginal people to succeed in all areas of Canadian society and the economy, Friendship Centres were (and continue to be) among the first organizations to provide urban Aboriginal people with the resources to acquire knowledge and to develop necessary skills. In this way, urban Aboriginal people gain an improved quality of life as a result of Friendship Centre programs and services.

Over its 50-year history, Friendship Centres have become enmeshed in the fabric of both Aboriginal and Canadian life. The Centres are a place for both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people to come together. They are the trustworthy, one-stop resource centre that can be accessed in many parts of Canada. In short, Friendship Centres are indispensable; it would be difficult to imagine a Canada without them.

Andrea and Édith - Two Stories of Success

Friendship Centres have shaped the lives of thousands of individuals across Canada. Whether it's the Aboriginal Head Start program or the youth drop-in centre, there is something deeper

than just a supportive building with four walls. As Andrea Landry, NAFC's former Youth Executive has phrased it, most people see Friendship Centre "as family".

To Andrea, Friendship Centres gave her the support she needed to turn her life around. In a recent testimonial she shared her story:

"Friendship Centres across this nation, have supported, guided, and transformed my life into something that taught me to speak with an open heart and an honest mind within all the work that I do. Whether I am living on my reserve, or I am in the city completing studies, I see the strength in our ceremonies, the strength in our languages, cultures, communities, and most importantly, the strength in our youth. We are now seeing youth accessing our programs rather than drinking and partying. We are seeing youth having conversations with our traditional elders"

– Andrea

Andrea is not the only story of success. The NAFC was delighted that Édith Cloutier, Director of the Native Friendship Centre in Val d'Or, has been awarded the Order of Canada for her life-long commitment to fighting racism and discrimination and for her contributions to improving the lives of Aboriginal people in urban areas.

With an Algonquin mother and Québécois father, Édith has always been conscious of her First Nations heritage. Édith faced discrimination at a very young age becoming aware of injustices. In a recent article in the Montreal Gazette she notes that her contribution “adds to the small steps that have been taken in the past 30 years toward reconciliation”⁴

As a champion for Friendship Centres and Director of the Friendship Centre in Val d’Or, Édith is quick to note that there’s still a lot of work to be done to break down the barriers Aboriginal people face in Canadian society. A fundamental aspect of her struggle involved dismissing myths about Aboriginal people. Édith points to some key misunderstandings about Aboriginal people, something she has dedicated her life to addressing. She notes that:

“It’s the myth that Aboriginal people don’t want to be part of society; the idea that reserves were our decision; the idea that we chose our governance systems with band councils; the belief that Aboriginal peoples are all the same when in fact there are over 600 Aboriginal communities, and the belief that we don’t pay taxes”

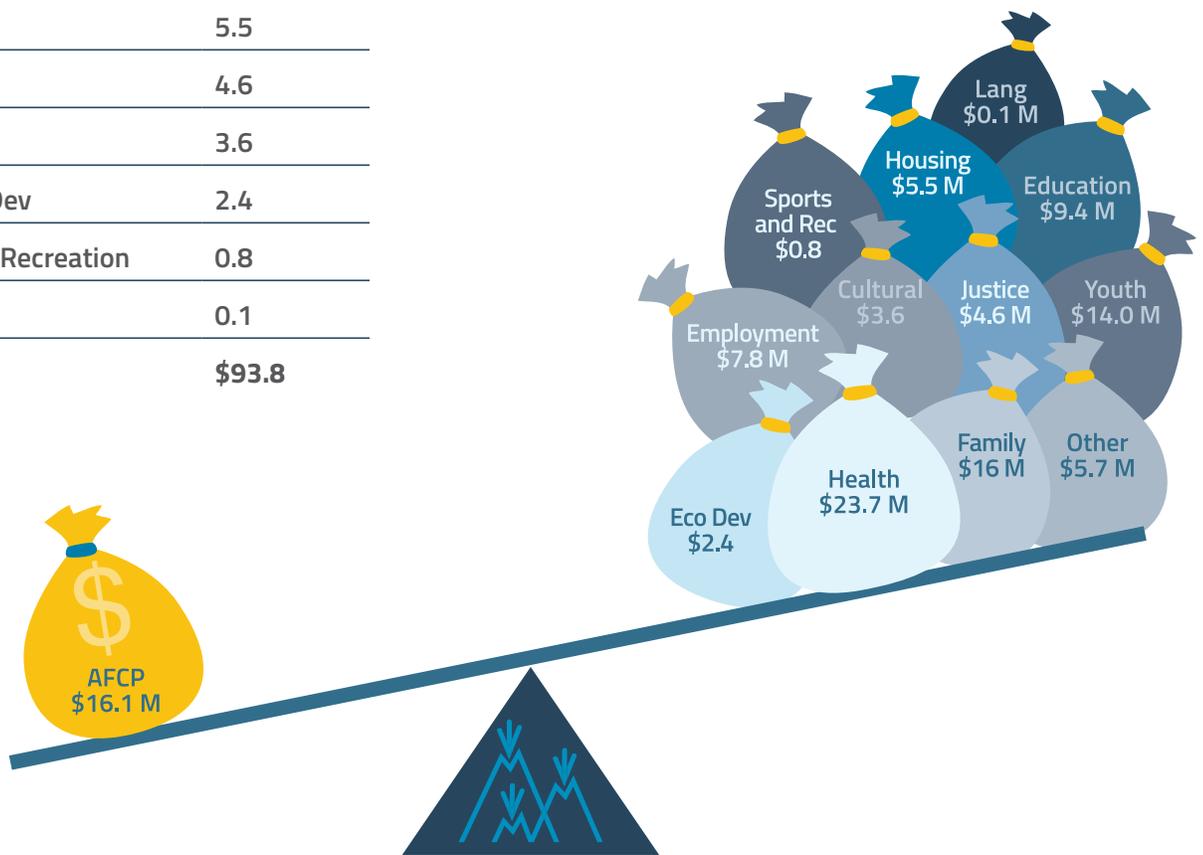
– Edith

Édith concludes stating that, “People think we live on the margins of society but in fact we want to contribute to Québécois and Canadian society.”

⁴ Montreal Gazette, June 28, 2013

“Friendship Centres have generally been more successful than other Aboriginal institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people in urban areas. Their programs have helped Aboriginal people maintain their cultural identity and group solidarity. In most urban areas, the Friendship Centre is the only major voluntary association available to Aboriginal people to fulfill their social, recreational and cultural development needs. Friendship Centres have played an important role in the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures currently under way in Aboriginal communities across Canada and have helped Aboriginal people assume a place in the Canadian cultural mosaic.” (The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996)

Program Area	\$ Million
Health	23.7
Family	16.0
Youth	14.2
Education	9.4
Employment	7.8
Other	5.7
Housing	5.5
Justice	4.6
Cultural	3.6
Economic Dev	2.4
Sports and Recreation	0.8
Language	0.1
Total	\$93.8



Friendship Centres

Chapter 3 – 2012 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) - The City is Our Home

The Environics Institute of Survey Research conducted a landmark study on urban Aboriginal people in Canada. One of the many interesting findings of the study was that more and more of Canada's Aboriginal people are calling cities home.

The purpose of the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) was to understand and systematically document the lives and experiences of urban Aboriginal people. The results of this study on the question of how Aboriginal people fare in urban settings was worth noting and there is great cause to anticipate further economic inclusion of urban Aboriginal populations.

When asked what they want to achieve in their lives, urban Aboriginal people cited the same aspirations other Canadians might name such as completing education (28%), caring for families (24%), achieving career and job satisfaction (22%), and home ownership (19%).⁵

Most Aboriginal people living in cities consider it "home" at 78%, and not simply a transitional place to get a job or go to school, while the majority of urban Aboriginal people surveyed claimed to like living in cities "a lot" at 65%. The overwhelming majority of respondents claimed to be happy living in the city and among those who reported high job satisfaction, 80% said they were very happy.

The study notes that the old conventional belief that Aboriginal people living in cities were just passing-through is no longer true. For most Aboriginal people today, the city is home with many coming for rewarding educational and economic opportunities. In many cases, there are families of urban Aboriginal people who have lived in an urban setting for 2 or sometimes 3 generations. These individuals have never lived any place other than an urban setting and for them it is the only place they have ever called home.

Urban Aboriginal people cited the same aspirations that other Canadians might name such as completing education caring for families achieving career and job satisfaction and home ownership.

Most aboriginals living in cities consider it 'home': 78%

⁵ *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, 2010, Environics Institute*

Chapter 4 – Governance

The NAFC is proud of its organizational structure and that for over 40 years this governance model has made the Association more accountable and transparent to its membership and federal partners. The NAFC have shown themselves responsible and good-faith partners while also being reliable and financially sound.

As an association, the NAFC serves as a central, unifying body for the Friendship Centre Movement, promoting on behalf of and advocating for the concerns of Aboriginal people at the local level. The NAFC then transmits these local concerns to the federal government and to the general public. In this task, the Association has been exceptional. The NAFC Board of Directors promote and advocate for the interests and concerns of three main bodies, or Friendship Centres themselves, Provincial/Territorial Associations and their membership.

The NAFC Board of Directors meets on a quarterly basis. This is the primary communication mechanism by which issues and concerns at the local level are brought forward to the national level for action by the NAFC Board of Directors and the national office staff. In addition, the Presidents and Executive Directors of the PTAs and NAFC meet annually to discuss urban Aboriginal policy and implement any changes.

Gender Representation:

As with overall staff positions and board representation, women outnumber men in terms of involvement in the Friendship Centre Movement. Women occupy 65% of the Executive Director positions filled. The large number of leadership roles given to women is a time-honored tradition within Friendship Centre Movement.

Financial Accountability Mechanism

The NAFC's partnership with the federal government throughout the years has resulted in effective program administration. Throughout the long history of service delivery, Friendship Centres, PTAs and the NAFC have established sound and transparent administrative practices, policies and procedures with respect to program delivery.

NAFC Federal Administration Overview 2013

- The current systems established by the PTAs, NAFC and Friendship Centres enable the NAFC and participating funders to effectively evaluate existing programs, creating more effective and accountable programming.
- The Friendship Centre Movement has also developed best practices within the administrative systems. Some PTAs have developed Program Review Committees (PRCs) which are responsible for reviewing AFCP applications and making funding recommendations to the NAFC for their particular regions.
- The NAFC has also established sound administrative practices under the Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth program, (CCAY). There are 7 Regional Desks which are responsible for the administration of the CCAY within their particular regions for all local sponsoring organizations. These Regional Desks facilitate Regional Proposal Review Committees (RPRCs) comprised of youth which are responsible for making funding recommendations to the NAFC Board of Directors.
- In 2012-2013, the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs ranked the NAFC as low in their general assessment (risk assessment).

Conclusion: Friendship Centres, a Program that Works

A document produced by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) cites a 2009 study by the Canadian Policy Research Network noting that:

"If left unchecked, the above average usage of government services by Aboriginal people will increase from \$6.2 B in 2006 to \$8.4 B by 2026. However, if by 2026 the education gap is eliminated the GDP will grow by \$179 B between 2001 and 2026."

This socio-economic gap will be further aggravated by the fact that the Aboriginal population is young and one of the fastest growing segments of Canadian society. Canada's Aboriginal population will continue to grow at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population, particularly in the Prairie provinces where this population growth will represent a significant proportion of the future labour force.

Ignoring these important demographic changes is a risk neither Aboriginal communities nor the Canadian economy can afford.

Over the long-term, Friendship Centres are a proven service delivery model and an Aboriginal economic inclusion system that works. At a time of skilled labour shortages throughout the Canadian economy, there remains simultaneous under-employment of the Aboriginal workforce and particularly Aboriginal youth in Canada. Paired with falling birth rates and a large 'baby boomer' generation already reaching retirement age, there is a tremendous opportunity for Aboriginal people to fully engage and participate in the Canadian social and economic worlds. For their part, Friendship Centres have been on the forefront of these inclusion efforts.

The answer to the policy question raised by the AANDC Discussion Guide is that the most effective policy and program delivery system in the urban Aboriginal environment are Friendship Centres. Investments and programs intended for urban Aboriginal targets are best coordinated through Friendship Centres who can utilize their significant national reach to leverage effective delivery. Friendship Centres can continue to

build on their achievements and those of countless volunteers who have contributed to this success year after year.

As the original urban Aboriginal strategy, Friendship Centres play a key role in Canadian society delivering demonstrable changes to the social and economic well-being of urban Aboriginal people. As a democratically elected, collaborative, inclusive, self-governing body, one with nearly a half-century of proven success and one that understands the urban Aboriginal story, Friendship Centres continue to do their part to stimulate the growth and inclusion of Aboriginal people in the economy and are uniquely positioned to help.

The NAFC has demonstrated a willingness to build healthy relationships with partners at all levels of government, with key strategic partners in the private sector and with Canada's trade unions. This has been key to their success. Working collaboratively, the NAFC hopes to continue to offer high-quality programs and services well into the future.

Having created the foundations for constructive and participatory relationship with over 600 Aboriginal groups in Canada including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, with non-Aboriginal Canadians and with all levels of government, Friendship Centres have much to be proud of.

Friendship Centers in Canada have proven transformative in communities across the country and with 119 operating Centres, they are an invaluable urban service delivery mechanism for what has been, at times, a difficult to access population demographic, changing the lives of countless individuals and becoming a vital part of the urban reality of Aboriginal people and of the Canadian social fabric. A ready-made, effective and proven Aboriginal strategy is available to Canadian policy-makers.

By recommitting to a partnership with the NAFC, Friendship Centres can do even more to help ensure Canada's economic recovery.

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National Association
of Friendship Centres