

BACKGROUND – Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (Urban Aboriginal Strategy)

The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition is pleased to announce the follow up to the *Moving Forward* project that was initiated last year with the input and endorsement of the Ottawa Aboriginal community at the forum held March 9, 2006. This project has been funded by the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, an initiative administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy promotes partnership between the Government of Canada, community organizations, Aboriginal People, and other levels of governments to support projects that respond to local priorities of urban Aboriginal people.

The overall objective of the *Moving Forward project* is to initiate a consultation, planning, and coordination process to examine the viability and establish Ottawa as the thirteenth city under Urban Aboriginal Strategy. Other key cities include Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Prince George, Prince Albert, Lethbridge, and Thompson.

The Coalition's *Moving Forward* project's objectives are to develop and undertake a community consultation process to introduce the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to Ottawa's Aboriginal community; identify issues from the community's perspective; begin the process to map out the next steps required to implement Ottawa's participation in the Urban Aboriginal Strategy; and liaison with municipal, provincial, federal and other stakeholders to support urban Aboriginal people living in the Ottawa area.

To accomplish these objectives the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition hosted a major consultation session on March 9, 2006 at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre with over 150 members of Ottawa's Aboriginal Community, businesses, and government officials. This meeting helped to identify community issues and concerns; establish priority areas; and identify areas of responsibility.

Based on the information gathered at the first forum, as well as follow up focus group sessions the Coalition will propose an appropriate governance structure at the March 15, 2007 2nd Ottawa Aboriginal Community Forum at the Odawa Friendship Centre.

Focus group sessions have been held with Aboriginal organizations to refine and focus the new governance model to be specific to respond to the priorities of the Ottawa/Gatineau regions for Aboriginal people.

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