Bridging the Gap: Connecting with Aboriginal Citizens in Your Community

June 4, 2012
Why an Urban Aboriginal Strategy?  
The Key Policy Drivers

• 54% of Aboriginal people live in urban centres.

• A disproportionate number of urban Aboriginal people have low levels of educational attainment and experience high rates of crime, poverty and incarceration.

• The urban Aboriginal population is young and growing.

• In the Prairie Provinces, this population growth will represent a significant proportion of the future labour force.

“Concerted action is needed to address the barriers to social and economic participation that many Aboriginal Canadians face.”
SFT 2011
Why a Federal Interest?

• Opportunity to address growing labour gap with a young, fast-growing and increasingly better-educated, urban Aboriginal population.

• Desire for strong healthy cities and the role Aboriginal people can play economically, socially and culturally.

• Opportunity to advance new social partnerships.

• Desire to achieve greater coherence between on and off-reserve agendas.

• Ensure complementarity of range of federal programming to maximize results for urban Aboriginal communities.

“The contribution of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples will be important to our future prosperity.” SFT 2011
The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) is a community-based initiative developed by the Government of Canada in 1997 to increase the economic participation and well being of Aboriginal people living in urban centres.

After existing as a modest pilot, the Government made a long term commitment to the UAS in 2007 by approving $68.5 million over a five year period. It was recently renewed in Budget 2012 for $27 million over a 2 year period.

There are currently 13 communities that receive UAS funding (Vancouver, Prince George, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Thompson, Winnipeg, Toronto, Thunder Bay, and Ottawa), and preliminary work is currently underway in Montreal and Halifax.

The UAS plays a key role building partnerships between all levels of government, urban Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders.

The UAS works through community steering committees with federal, provincial and municipal engagement, to identify local needs and practical local solutions.

Focused on increasing the participation of urban Aboriginal people in the economy, the UAS has concentrated on: improving life skills; promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurship; and supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.
Vision: A New Comprehensive Approach

- On April 1, 2012, three program elements from PCH’s Aboriginal People’s Program were transferred to AANDC: the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP), Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY) and Young Canada Works for Urban Aboriginal Youth (YCW).

- Consolidating these programs with the UAS into a new urban Aboriginal policy framework will offer a greater range of policy and program levers that will respond to national priorities and key departmental reforms that transcend reserve boundaries.

- An expanded footprint will result in a greater ability to influence partners at all levels, leading to real change in how Aboriginal issues are addressed in Canada.
The Way Forward

• The consolidated urban Aboriginal policy framework will build off of the following five pillars the UAS identified as key requirements in being able to develop pragmatic solutions to address urban Aboriginal issues in a coordinated fashion in order to promote self-reliance and increase economic participation of Aboriginal peoples living in urban centres:

  □ **Engagement** - Broad based engagement of the community and other key stakeholders;
  □ **Horizontality** - Connecting and coordinating federal efforts across departments;
  □ **Alignment** - Coordinating and formalizing federal, provincial, municipal and other key stakeholder efforts to support communities through various instruments;
  □ **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; supporting socially innovative partnership approaches; and,
  □ **Inclusiveness** - Inclusive to all Aboriginal peoples in an urban setting (i.e. not a distinctions or rights-based approach).

• A number of adjustments will also be made:

  □ Employ a regional approach (while maintaining a footprint in the existing 13 UAS communities) to enable greater alignment with provinces and engage in innovative partnership opportunities outside of current UAS cities;
  □ Seek greater alignment with AANDC’s on-reserve agenda; and
  □ Explore opportunities to use Friendship Centres and their current infrastructure as a vehicle to expand the Departments reach and impact into more than 100 urban centres across Canada, including the North.