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## **IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH**

**For Immediate Release**

**August 15, 2007**

**SASKATOON** – On August 15, 2007 Maurice Vellacott, Member of Parliament for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin announced a contribution of \$100,000 through the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC) programming element of the Aboriginal Peoples' Program to the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre at their Wall Street Location.

In Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population, more Aboriginal children live in poverty, more Aboriginal children are living in lone parent families, and 35% of Aboriginal children change residences at least once a year.

In the city of Saskatoon, the Aboriginal population had grown to 9% in 2001 from 7.4% in 1996. The 2001 Statistics Canada census shows that the Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area has a total population of 225,927 and an Aboriginal population of 20,275, which is growing faster than any other population. Statistics Canada expects to release the Aboriginal peoples' population statistics for 2006 on January 15, 2008. It is expected that Saskatoon's Aboriginal population will have grown again. Many Aboriginal families in Saskatoon live in poverty and generally cannot afford to participate in recreational, educational and cultural programs.

Vellacott said, "The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (SIMFC) has a well-established Board of Directors with considerable experience in community program delivery. The SIMFC has successfully delivered UMAC projects in previous fiscal years." Vellacott also noted that the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre has established partnerships with other organizations including Saskatoon District Health, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatchewan Justice, and the Elizabeth Fry Society. It also receives project funding for a Hepatitis C project from Health Canada.

The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre Youth Program will take place in downtown Saskatoon. The target population is Aboriginal youth, aged 15-24, but other youth will be welcome to participate as family members and friends. Youth will be actively involved in the planning, development and delivery of the project.

Youth will participate on a drop-in basis in various capacity-building sessions. Workshops will be offered on personal development, sports leadership, CPR, and babysitting. Activities will include social awareness and cultural activities, educational and employment information, and recreation. Youth will have access to assistance for resume writing and to the resource centre where they can study or do Internet research. Building personal confidence will be central to the activities offered to youth at the SIMFC. This project will equip and encourage more youth to address challenges that they face and improve their life prospects.