



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
[release number]
Dec. 18, 2012

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
Métis Nation British Columbia

First communities announced for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan

VICTORIA - Five pilot communities will participate in the first phase of the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP). The pilot communities are: Vancouver, Surrey, Prince George, Kamloops, and Duncan.

The aim of ORAAP is to improve the lives of the increasing numbers of Aboriginal people who choose to live in urban/off-reserve areas and is being implemented through an initial partnership between the provincial Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), local governments, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Métis Nation British Columbia.

The Oct. 3, 2011 provincial speech from the throne committed the B.C. government to work with Aboriginal partners, the federal government and local governments to develop an Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan that focuses on improving both the social and economic situations of Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve in B.C.

In addition to working with these groups, the commitment also supports the involvement of groups, such as the business sector, philanthropic organizations and academic partners to come up with ways to support social innovation, and more effectively and efficiently deliver programs for off-reserve Aboriginal people at the community level.

Although there are many programs and services that provide social supports to the off-reserve Aboriginal population in B.C., poor standards of living continue to exist for many. There are several reasons for this, including the experience of residential schools. As a result, many urban Aboriginal families are currently living in multi-generational cycles of poverty. Addressing these challenges is the overall goal of ORAAP.

Local Friendship Centres in Duncan, Surrey, Kamloops and Prince George will coordinate the community planning work there. In Vancouver, the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) will coordinate the community planning work.

B.C.'s Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan will align with the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS). Given the common goals and objectives of ORAAP and the UAS, the federal government, through AANDC, and the provincial government, through MARR, have agreed to work together to link both initiatives.

Now that the pilot communities have been selected, the next step will be to work with the Friendship Centres and MVAEC to begin planning in the five communities. These organizations will hold discussions on the formation of local community teams to oversee planning processes and establish a process and timelines for the development of community action plans. Community-driven action plans that reflect local interests will be a key outcome of the community pilots.

Quotes:

Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Ida Chong –

“The selection of these five pilot communities is a significant step forward in developing B.C.’s Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan. What we hope to see happen in these communities is the development and implementation of initiatives that ultimately will improve both social and economic outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people.”

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada Minister John Duncan –

“For years we have been collaborating with other governments and organizations, through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, to implement projects that respond to local priorities such as improving life skills, promoting job training and supporting Aboriginal women, children and families. We will continue to work with our partners through initiatives like this to create the conditions for healthier, more self-sufficient First Nation people and communities.”

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres President Annette Morgan –

“This is another important step in the implementation of the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan and the Federal Urban Aboriginal Strategy. The voices of our People at the community level must be central to this work, and these five pilot sites move us in that direction. We appreciate the investment from both the Federal and Provincial Governments to enable this work, particularly during this time of fiscal restraint”.

Métis Nation BC Minister of Children and Families, Daniel Pitman –

“I am encouraged by the ORAAP announcement as I believe this is an excellent opportunity for Métis Community leadership to improve the socio-economic needs of Métis children and families of British Columbia. I encourage the Métis community leadership to become actively involved in the process of developing local action plans to achieve healthier outcomes for Métis Citizens of British Columbia in the areas of education, employment, healthier families and strengthen Métis culture and traditions.”

Children and Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux –

“Each of these communities faces unique challenges and has different sets of resources to address poverty. The action plan will work towards improving standards of living for off-reserve Aboriginal people by addressing distinct socio-economic barriers at a community level.”

Social Development Minister Moira Stilwell –

“The opportunity to support Aboriginal people in B.C. communities using innovative approaches will add tremendous value in terms of creating and strengthening partnerships that address regional challenges. Offering skills training and employment opportunities in a collaborative way is important and will facilitate community inclusion.”

A backgrounder follows.

BACKGROUND

Improving socio-economic outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people

The five ORAAP pilot communities were selected by a Provincial Co-ordination Team (PCT) made up of representatives from the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR). The team's role is to oversee the development of ORAAP and to manage its implementations.

Communities were chosen by the PCT based on several factors, including: high concentrations of B.C.'s urban Aboriginal population; alignment with the federal Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS); coverage of key regions of the province; critical mass of programs and services; and the readiness of the community to participate in a pilot project.

Canada's Urban Aboriginal Strategy

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) is a community-based initiative developed by the Government of Canada to improve social and economic opportunities of Aboriginal people living in urban centres. The UAS has an annual budget of \$13.5 million and has funded 639 projects since 1997.

Through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Government of Canada partners with the Aboriginal community and local organizations, municipal and provincial governments and with the private sector. These partnerships support projects that respond to local priorities and advance the UAS national priority areas of: improving life skills, promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurship and supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.

Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council

MVAEC was formed in 2008 and represents over 20 urban off-reserve Aboriginal service-providing organizations in Metro Vancouver. By working collaboratively, the MVAEC strategically plans and advocates for strengthened service delivery and effective policy development to improve outcomes for the Metro Vancouver urban Aboriginal community.

Non-governmental Provincial Coordination Team Members

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC)

B.C. partners with the BCAAFC for community development, planning and program delivery of friendship centre programs. These programs include culturally responsive services for Aboriginal people living in urban areas and a range of cultural, social and recreational programming that strengthens Aboriginal families and communities.

The Friendship Centre movement is built on community support, trust, strong leadership, tradition and faith and is mandated to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal Peoples throughout Canada.

Located in Victoria, the BCAAFC is the umbrella association for 25 Friendship Centres throughout B.C. Aboriginal Friendship Centres are located across Canada.

Recently, the B.C. government and the BCAAFC signed a protocol agreement that includes key principles that will guide the relationship between the partners as they move forward together to develop and implement ORAAP. The identification of the five pilot communities supports this agreement.

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC)

MNBC is the Métis political body in British Columbia. MNBC represents 35 Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia and is mandated to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services.

MNBC was created in 1996 and was formally incorporated as the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC). In 2003, the Métis leadership ratified the Métis Nation British Columbia Constitution thereby establishing a new Métis Nation governance structure. Since 2003, the Métis Nation British Columbia leadership has implemented a number of institutions of governance such as the Senate, Métis Nation Governing Assembly, Youth representation, Women's representation, an Electoral Act, and an objectively verifiable citizenship process.

Contacts:

Mark Brennae
Communications Director
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and
Reconciliation
250 361-7720 (cell)

Métis Nation British Columbia
Tracey Thornhill
Executive Assistant
604-581-5857

Media Relations
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern
Development Canada
819 953-1160

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship
Centres
Paul Lacerte
Executive Director
250-388-5522