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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR NATIONAL CHIEF
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6th SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
NEW YORK CITY, NY
MAY 21, 2007**

KWEY, HELLO ET BONJOUR,

**AU NOM DU CONGRES DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES, JE VEUX
REMERCIER LES MEMBRES DU FORUM D'AVOIR ACCEPTE DE TENIR
UNE DEMI-JOURNEE DE DISCUSSIONS SUR LA SITUATION DES PEUPLES
AUTOCHTONES EN MILIEU URBAIN.**

**LORS DU FORUM PERMANENT EN MAI DERNIER, NOUS AVONS FAIT LA
DEMANDE PUBLIQUE POUR LA CONSIDERATION DE CETTE QUESTION
DANS L'AGENDA DU FORUM VU LA CROISSANCE DE CE PHENOMENE.**

**LE CONGRES DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES EST UNE ORGANISATION
NATIONALE POLITIQUE QUI DEFEND LES DROITS ET INTERETS DES
AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA QUI SE TROUVE HORS DU CONTEXTE DES
RESERVES ET DANS LES MILIEUX URBAINS DEPUIS 1971.**

**I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE SOME FACTS AS IT PERTAINS TO THE OFF-
RESERVE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA.**

**THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1.3 MILLION INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN
CANADA. OF THAT NUMBER 79% LIVE OFF-RESERVE.**

FOR EVERY \$8 THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDS FOR ON-RESERVE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, ONLY \$1 IS SPENT OFF RESERVES SO THERE IS AN UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION LIVE IN URBAN AREAS.

THERE IS A HARSH REALITY IN CANADA THAT LIFE IN MANY RESERVE COMMUNITIES OFFER VERY LITTLE HOPE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, INCLUDING LACK OF HOUSING, HIGH RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT, SUICIDE, EDUCATION AND A LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES TO NAME A FEW.

IT IS TRUE THAT MANY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA RELOCATE TO URBAN SETTINGS BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE LIFE WILL BE BETTER. MANY CHOOSE TO LEAVE THEIR RESERVE COMMUNITIES WITH THE HOPE OF FINDING EMPLOYMENT OR TO PURSUE POST SECONDARY STUDIES. HENCE, RELOCATION IS OCCURING AS PART OF THE NORMAL TREND OF GLOBALIZATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, MANY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WHO RELOCATED WITH THE HOPE OF FINDING A BETTER LIFE CONTINUE TO FACE POOR SOCIAL CONDITIONS. I WOULD LIKE HOWEVER, TO CONCENTRATE ON THE INCREASING NUMBER OF SUCCESS STORIES BECAUSE IT IS THESE SUCCESSES THAT WILL CREATE HOPE AND OPPORUNITY.

THERE ARE AN ABUNDANCE OF ADVANTAGES FOR URBAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO UTILIZE FOR THEIR OVERALL BENEFIT BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MORE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND BETTER ACCESS TO A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND I PERSONALLY KNOW MANY YOUNG INDIGENOUS MEMBERS OF OUR NATIONS WILLING TO BENEFIT FROM THOSE OPPORTUNITIES.

IN CANADA, THERE ARE MANY ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO URBAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, INCLUDING FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS, REGIONAL INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY ORGANIZATIONS. BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY SERVICE DELIVERY ORGANIZATIONS, THIS OFTEN LEADS TO DUPLICATION OF SERVICES. TO BE FULLY EFFECTIVE WE MUST FOCUS ON DEVELOPING A PROVINCE-BY-PROVINCE HANDBOOK AND OUTREACH STRATEGY ON EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO ASSIST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN URBAN AREAS.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO MOBILITY OF RIGHTS. ONE'S RIGHT TO ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ENDS AT THE RESERVE BORDER, THUS MAKING STATUS INDIANS ONE OF THE ONLY GROUPS IN CANADIAN SOCIETY WHO ARE NOT ENTITLED TO THE FREEDOM OF MOBILITY PROMISED BY THE CONSTITUTION, AND ENJOYED BY VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER CITIZENS IN THE COUNTRY.

IN CONCLUSION, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS THE FACT THAT WE SUPPORT ALL THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON URBAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MIGRATION SINCE WE WERE ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE MEETING.

AMONG OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS, THERE WAS A CALL FROM INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS THAT STATES AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD SUPPORT AND FUND URBAN INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES OR INDIGENOUS POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AIMED AT PROMOTING THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF URBAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. IN THAT MATTER, I SHALL COMMEND THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT BY CANADA WITHIN THE NEW URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY CONSISTING OF A FIVE YEAR INVESTMENT OF 70 MILLION. THE PROGRAM WILL FOCUS ON IMPROVING LIFE SKILLS, PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

COLLECTIVELY, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT URBANIZATION OF OUR PEOPLES IS A REALITY AND WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND AND THAT URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO FULFILL THEIR HUMAN POTENTIAL.

FINALLY, MADAM CHAIRPERSON, LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARD WORK OF ABORIGINAL SERVICE-DELIVERY ORGANIZATIONS IN ASSISTING OUR ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS IN URBAN AREAS. WITHOUT THAT LEVEL OF DEDICATION, OUR PEOPLES WOULD INDEED REMAIN TO BE CALLED, "THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLES".

MEEGWETCH!