

## STATEMENT OF COUNCILLOR RON HAYTER

(August 30, 2005 – Edmonton City Hall, Council Chambers)

It is my pleasure to move approval of the Declaration of Edmonton City Council on Strengthening Relationships between the City of Edmonton and Urban Aboriginal People, seconded by Mayor Mandel.

This declaration springs from Council's decision on May 17, when funding was approved for the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative project.

At that time, I indicated that the underpinning for this initiative – the foundation, if you like – would be the development of a Council statement.

At that time, I said the statement, or declaration would “acknowledge the proud history and honored traditions of Aboriginal Peoples in Edmonton, and their contributions to the social, cultural and economic development of the city”.

I added: “It will also send out a clear signal that we welcome future generations of Aboriginals to make their homes here and contribute to the continued economic growth, cultural diversity and prosperity of Edmonton.”

I made it clear that the statement must be done in cooperation with and the concurrence of the Aboriginal community ... although, ultimately, it would be Council's words, Council's declaration.

To achieve this goal, I have shared our thoughts with many Aboriginal people during the past three months, including Aboriginal leaders representing such organizations as the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, but also with many individual citizens in the Aboriginal community. And finally, I sought the collective wisdom of the Elders Circle that meets regularly to provide wisdom and perspective to the Urban Aboriginal Accord Initiative. The declaration before you was shaped and molded by these discussions and input.

It's been a fascinating, enlightening and truly uplifting experience.

In an e-mail I received after meeting with the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, Tibetha Kemble said:

“I would like to express my sincere thanks for drafting such an incredible document. When you read the statement to our committee, it sang to me.”

And Francis Bad Eagle, a distinguished member of the Elders Circle, called it a “bridge of understanding, linking the past with the future”.

Many changes were made along the way, culminating in the document before you today. And, prior to bringing it forward, I met individually with the Mayor and all Councillors.

To the best of our knowledge and research this declaration represents the first comprehensive acknowledgement by a Canadian city, of the importance - past, present and future - of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status Aboriginal people in our city.

It is not meant to be a static and inelastic declaration, but a living document that recognizes the vitality and increasing importance of the Aboriginal community as we continue our journey into the future.

Edmonton has one of the fastest growing Aboriginal populations of any urban centre in Canada and this is expected to increase over the next decade to where it could be the largest in the country.

We see this declaration as being the foundation of the City’s efforts to accommodate this growth in a positive and meaningful fashion.

These are more than words on a piece of paper. They represent Council’s commitment to the future, a future in which the Aboriginal community will play an increasingly significant role.

I want to express my appreciation to everyone who participated in this inspiring process, especially Mike Kroening, and the staff of the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord office and the Mayor’s office.

I would now like to read the declaration: