

ANNUAL REPORT 2005 - 2006

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DODEM KANONHSA'

A Proud Partnership Between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
and The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's fast paced society, there is often not enough time to reflect on ourselves. We live in a society that seems so rushed. For many Aboriginal people, what it means to be Aboriginal is grounded in the history of their people and, more specifically, in the history of their respective Nations. Their traditional beliefs are based around staying grounded, and taking care of, first themselves, and then those around them - mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually.

In history, their stories, traditions and ceremonies were never written. Oration was the only means by which they would remember the Native Way of Life. Aboriginal Elders are an example of those who have mastered the art of the human voice and mind. The stories, teachings and beliefs indicate who and what they are as a people.

The scope of this report will reflect on the activities that entail the Dodem Kanonhsa' Aboriginal Cultural Facility. Its past, present and future are carefully addressed in the following pages.

This past year we had a 4% increase of participants. There is also a list of groups who had booked Elders and Teachers outside of the lodge as part of our newly incorporated Outside Referral Program. We also added a Trends and Opportunities section that compares Dodem Kanonhsa' to an alternative health care program, a service that has increased access due to technology and an increase of awareness of environmental protection.

Our objectives for 2006 - 2007 are also touched on. One of our goals is to increase participation from children and youth groups. On top of this we are currently working with a production company on developing our own website. This should be completed and launched in July 2006. We will also start recording stats for Outside Referrals with a questionnaire to be provided to outside organizations, business and groups. Enjoy.

2.0 DESCRIPTION

The Dodem Kanonhsa' provides the Greater Toronto Area with an open space where the teachings of our Aboriginal Grandfathers and Grandmothers can be explored. Elders and Traditional Teachers are available on a bi-monthly basis to help individual and families seeking guidance and harmony. They are also available to teach others the history, language and traditions of their particular Nation - and they do so with an open heart. The services are open to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and encourage sharing and understanding of the Aboriginal culture and its philosophies.

Workshops are provided on a monthly basis. Titles such as Hand Drum Making, Stress Management, The Power of Movement, Grief and Grieving and many more unique topics are offered by skilled practitioners, teachers and leaders.

The Lodge also provides Outside Referral Services to the social and business sectors. When people call and inquire about seeking an Aboriginal component to their events, meetings, celebrations, gatherings and conferences, the Dodem Kanonhsa' is available to assist in these inquiries.

Celebrating its eighth year of operation this coming September 21, and being the only one of its kind within the Greater Toronto Area for Aboriginal awareness, the Dodem Kanonhsa' has grown in its own remarkable way.

While it strives to promote the rich traditional knowledge of the land reflected in Aboriginal stories, art and ceremonies, we keep in mind each day that we remain grounded and acknowledge the importance in the balance between mind, body, spirit and culture.



Carla Robinson of CBC Newsworld and her camera man at the Dodem Kanonhsa' to promote the program and to Launch the Lieutenant Governor's, James Bartlman, Book Launch.

3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following the Oka Crisis in 1990, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) sought ways to improve cultural understanding among staff. One solution was to build a cultural facility in the Department's Headquarters in Gatineau, Quebec, that focussed on traditional teachings and counselling services provided by the most well respected people of the Aboriginal culture - Elders and Traditional Teachers. The 'Kumik Lodge' was built in order to provide Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees the opportunity to seek guidance and teachings from Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Teachers.

Building on the success of the Kumik, the opportunity arrived to build a similar facility in INAC's Ontario Regional Office in Toronto. On August 27, 1997 the Board of Directors of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) wrote to John Donnelly, INAC's Regional Director General. This letter indicated a desire by the NCCT to enter into a partnership with INAC to provide administrative and support services for the delivery of a Toronto-based Kumik project.

The Lodge opened on September 21, 1998, and was given the name **Dodem Kanonhsa'**. **Dodem** is an Ojibwe word meaning Clan and **Kanonhsa'** is a Mohawk word meaning Lodge, the name is also transcribed into Cree syllabics. This name was chosen in order to represent the main tribes prominent to the Ontario Region.

4.0 MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

To My Fellow Community Members:

It never ceases to amaze me through the work that I do how much more I enjoy it each passing year. I am deeply honoured with the role I have been given and am extremely passionate about the Mandate of the Dodem Kanonhsa'. This June will mark my sixth year. Not only has this site been my place of employment, it has been my place of constant reflection, learning and sharing. The words that our Elders and Teachers have spoken over the years have been profoundly wise, essential and captivating.

The location of this lodge is on the sixth floor of a Government of Canada building. To those who frequent the lodge or have only visited once, the lodge may appear small, but the healing that takes place within its walls is phenomenally large. Each Elder, Traditional Teacher, Healer or Seer that has passed through the lodge doors kindly offer what they have learned because they share a vision in retaining and exhibiting the unique uplifting stories, knowledge and beliefs of our Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Elders and Teachers are an exceptional people. When they speak about restoring our health and restoring the land, they speak of it in the same breath. They are key players in the traditional wisdom and knowledge of the land. "Living libraries" - Aboriginal Elders and Teachers remember the old ways, old ceremonies, the songs to sing for plant gathering, which medicines to use - and they do so with such detail, patience and passion. Constantly marvelled by their particular attention to detail, I am often amazed by the amount of knowledge they have acquired all by the means of oral tradition.

I believe in the work I provide to the community. I am blessed to have the Dodem Kanonhsa' Advisory Committee working with me. I am proud to have this role and am conscious in the importance of my responsibilities. Thank you to everyone who has ever supported the program. Thank you to the Elders, Teachers, Seers and Healers who visit in order to make this program a success. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julia Valencia
Manager

SOME SIGHTINGS of DODEM KANONHSA' EVENTS



Maple Festival Sightings

Top Left: Employees of Indian Affairs Canada and community members come together and dance to celebrate the Maple Festival

Top Right: Gracious volunteers (staff of Indian Affairs) prepare food for the Maple Festival

Bottom Left: Elder Kevin Deer smiles for the camera

5.0 STATISTICAL INFORMATION

April 2004 - 2005	April 2005 - 2006	INCREASE/ DECREASE
4886	5089	203 or 4% increase

Bookings through the lodge include participation from the following groups:

Organizations	Businesses	Corporations
1. Toronto Community Housing 2. Assembly of First Nations 3. Native Child & Family Services of Toronto 4. Toronto Residents in Partnership 5. Anduhyaun Women's Shelter 6. Ontario Native Welfare Administrative Association 7. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health 8. Native Women in the Arts 9. Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy 10. Girl Guides of Canada 11. Able Translations Limited 12. Native Women's Resource Centre 13. Native Men's Residence 14. Tumivut Youth Shelter 15. Aboriginal Legal Services 16. Chiefs of Ontario 17. Bouseleil First Nations Health Centre 18. Maple Hurst Correctional Facilities	1. CIBC 2. The Bata Shoe Museum 3. Scotia Bank 4. Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business	1. Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation

Government	Schools	Other
1. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - Head Quarters and Ontario Region 2. Citizenship and Immigration 3. Canada Revenue Agency 4. Environment Canada 5. Law Society of Upper Canada 6. Ministry of Health and Long Term Care 7. Lieutenant Government of Canada (book launch) 8. Health Canada - Learning Careers Program 9. Transport Canada 10. The Ontario Early Years Centre 11. Ontario Bar Association	1. Inglenook School 2. York University 3. Halton School 4. Trillium College 5. Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario 6. Seneca College - Inaugural Aboriginal Advisory Committee 7. Gledhill Public School 8. Rosedale Public School 9. Osgoode Hall - Aboriginal Law Student Association 10. Ryerson University - Media Relations	1. Wedding 2. Wedding 3. National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation 4. Hospital For Sick Children 5. CBC Newsworld 6. Cooking with the Wolfman 7. Aboriginal People's Television Network - Annual General Meeting 8. Women in Leadership Forum 2005 - 2006 9. Ontario Bar Association 10. Big Soul Productions

6.0 GUIDING PHILOSOPHIES

Vision

To create a welcoming place for people to share in the oral teachings of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis nations across Turtle Island.

Mission

Dodem Kanonhsa' Aboriginal Cultural Facility will strive to ensure the space is open for learning and sharing fostering greater acceptance, understanding and harmony between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Values

1. Present our services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in a way that is accessible, appropriate and easily understood.
2. Act in an honest, fair and just manner
3. Aim to include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our program
4. Share with each other openly and respectfully.

7.0 PRIORITIES

The Dodem Kanonhsa's main priority is reflected in its Mission Statement but also includes:

Priority 1 - to forge partnerships and share knowledge

Develop and nurture Aboriginal Awareness partnerships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in the public and private sectors at all levels - local, regional, national and international.

Priority 2 - to respect Aboriginal cultures

Maintain open, two way communication with participants and ensure that our invited Elders/Traditional Resource People provide adequate and relevant information

Priority 3 - To build capacity

Build Aboriginal awareness capacity, especially among the non-Aboriginal community



A women's Hand Drum group performs for a crowd during the Dodem Kanonhsa' Maple Festival

8.0 TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Over the years, Aboriginal art and heritage has begun an explosive rebirth. There are a number of benefits resulting from a rich and vibrant Aboriginal cultural community especially within the programs and services provided by the Dodem Kanonhsa':

Alternative Health Care:

Trends

Although still considered unconventional, traditional Aboriginal healing practices are becoming more mainstream. More and more people are preferring traditional healing practices through use of herbal remedies native to the land we refer to as Turtle Island. As a result, Ceremonial specialists/prayers/songs are being used to restore balance and healing.

Opportunities

There is a chance of increased exposure of awareness of Aboriginal culture and practices to mainstream society and a better understanding of traditional practices through shared learning amongst one another.

Increased Access to Services Due to Technology:

Trends

Today, many people are using visual and audio tools. The internet is the highest used device in society. People search the net to find out information for just about anything.

Opportunities

By providing access to information pertaining to Aboriginal culture, especially the Dodem Kanonhsa' and its services, the program can offer resources for students in schools, therefore, increasing access to Aboriginal culture in mainstream society and bringing people in that might not have come in the past.

Increased Awareness of Environmental Protection:

Trends

Over the past decade there has been an explosion of environmental safety issues around the world.

Opportunities

The Dodem Kanonhsa' program can be a main supplier in increased natural and cultural sustainability as it pertains to Aboriginal beliefs.

9.0 VISITING ELDERS AND TRADITIONAL RESOURCE PEOPLE

The greater part of our services is provided through the Elders/Traditional Resource People Program. These individuals are selected based on their experience, their spiritual and traditional knowledge, and their ability to pass on this experience to others in a one-to-one setting or small/large group setting. Their main purpose is to provide culturally relevant services such as spiritual counselling, traditional concepts and beliefs, ceremonies and practices, be available to serve as a source of accurate information about the Aboriginal culture and to celebrate the accomplishments of others when requested. They are available on a bi-monthly basis and are promoted through posters via email, fax, and mailing lists on a monthly basis.



Traditional Teachers' Dan and Mary Lou Smoke.

A very well respected couple among the Toronto Aboriginal community.

Each of our invited Elders/Traditional Resource People bring a unique perspective based on Traditional Native Teachings from various Nations. Many have returned after successful visits and

a few were first time visitors.

By taking part in the program participants have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and understanding of Native Culture and have increased their ability to work and communicate effectively in a multicultural setting.

10.0 OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

The Dodem Kanohsa' will continue to promote a high level of excellence in the awareness of Aboriginal cultural life, traditions and beliefs. By doing so, continued emails through our Monthly Contact List, faxes and postings will ensure this is properly accomplished. The establishment of our website development will also assist in ensuring this is done.

To ensure that all participants and visitors, including seniors, youth, low income people, members of ethnic minority and other distinct groups have an opportunity to enjoy and participate in Dodem Kanonhsa' activities, the Dodem Kanonhsa' will also continue to follow its Mandate.

One of our biggest goals this year will be to increase teachings of cultural traditions to children and youth. We believe that in order sustain and maintain our culture we need to give the opportunity to children and youth to learn about the Native Way of Life. Also, keeping in mind that they are our future leaders and keeping them grounded on traditional Aboriginal beliefs will help them to continue to be strong and proud.

The Dodem Kanonhsa' is currently building on information resources thru a website development. In collaboration with Lathwell Productions, our website will encompass the activities that are taking place within the lodge, teachings from our Elders and information on Aboriginal practices. The launch of the website will take place in July 2006.

Another objective we have added to our list will be to record Outside Referral Program events to monthly statistics which will show a more defined number of people. We will expect that our statistical numbers will skyrocket as a result. In doing so, we will be creating a questionnaire in terms of the services that we will provide and ask for suggestions and feedback to Outside Referral agencies.

The Dodem Kanonhsa' will also continue and sustain current programming. This also includes participation in the Canadian Aboriginal Festival and The Annual Traditional Awareness Gathering.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Visiting Elders, Traditional Teachers, Traditional Workshops, the Visiting School's Program, The Canadian Aboriginal Festival, and The Traditional Awareness Gathering are just a handful of the countless projects that were constructed through the Dodem Kanonhsa' this past year.

The teachings that are being offered through our services are passed willingly by our Visiting Elders and Traditional Teachers. These are first hand experiences and have been given to our clients through generations of passed Elders and Teachers. It is through them that we are hopeful with anyone who partakes in our program or contracts out our services they be able to walk more courageously and humbly on their paths.

Reflecting on our guiding philosophies of our vision, mission and values of the program, we

continue to strive for the promotion of our culture, teachings and ways of life. On working to maintain these traditions, we keep in mind that no matter how smart we get, nature is our biggest teacher.

It is our goal that we will be able to continue the success of the Dodem Kanonhsa' program and that our current list of contacts will remain active while our doors continue to stay open for new contacts wanting to learn more about our time honoured traditional values and perspectives.

Once again, I would like to thank the Advisory Committee for all of their hard work, perseverance, enthusiasm and commitment to the current success of the Dodem Kanonhsa'.

Julia Valencia

Manager



Two of our newest Traditional Teachers' Curtis and Rhonda Hopkins.