

2. **SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CENTRE ON VICTORIA ISLAND**
SOUTIEN EN VUE D'UN CENTRE AUTOCHTONE NATIONAL SUR L'ÎLE VICTORIA

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That Council support a National Indigenous Centre in the Nation's Capital, and to encourage the Federal Government to work with stakeholders (First Nations, Province of Ontario, etc.) to establish a National Indigenous Centre on Victoria Island.

RECOMMANDATION DU COMITÉ

Que le Conseil d'Ottawa indique son soutien à un centre autochtone national dans la capitale et encourage le gouvernement fédéral à travailler avec les intervenants (Premières Nations, province de l'Ontario, etc.) afin d'établir un centre autochtone national sur l'île Victoria.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Councillor Cullen's report dated 18 November 2010 (ACS2010-CCS-CPS-0034).

Report to/Rapport au :

**Community and Protective Services Committee
Comité des services communautaires et de protection**

and Council / et au Conseil

18 November 2010 / le 18 novembre 2010

**Submitted by/Soumis par : Alex Cullen, Councillor/Conseiller
Bay/Baie (7)**

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CITY WIDE/À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE

Ref N°: ACS2010-CCS-CPS-0034

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CENTRE ON VICTORIA ISLAND

OBJET : SOUTIEN EN VUE D'UN CENTRE AUTOCHTONE NATIONAL SUR L'ÎLE VICTORIA

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That Community & Protective Services Committee recommend to Ottawa City Council to indicate its support for a National Indigenous Centre in the Nation's Capital, and to encourage the Federal Government to work with stakeholders (First Nations, Province of Ontario, etc.) to establish a National Indigenous Centre on Victoria Island.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des services communautaires et de protection recommande au Conseil d'Ottawa d'indiquer son soutien à un centre autochtone national dans la capitale et d'encourager le gouvernement fédéral à travailler avec les intervenants (Premières Nations, province de l'Ontario, etc.) afin d'établir un centre autochtone national sur l'île Victoria.

BACKGROUND

Canada's indigenous peoples currently have no place in Ottawa to showcase their living and traditional culture, knowledge, languages and spirit.

As well, there is no national centre celebrating all of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit anywhere in Canada to draw the many indigenous peoples together, to celebrate indigenous cultures, world views, and wisdom with other Canadians, and with the world.

In the mid-1980's, Jean Pigott, Chair of the National Capital Commission, proposed that Ottawa desperately needed a National Aboriginal Centre (the term Indigenous is currently used since it is somewhat broader and more inclusive), to be located on Victoria Island in the Ottawa River at the foot of Parliament Hill. She saw the lack of such a centre as a major deficiency in telling Canada's story in the Nation's Capital, in its role to represent all Canadians, and to showcase what makes us Canadian. She and her successor Marcel Beaudry, Chair of the NCC from 1992-2006, worked hard for many years to make a National Indigenous Centre a reality. The current administration of the NCC continues to support this initiative, and preliminary work has been done in developing the concept.

Esteemed Algonquin Elder William Commanda (who is a Grandfather of the Algonquin Nation, and is eminently respected) developed a marvellous vision for this Centre and has been promoting it for over 15 years (*see Document 1*). Elder Commanda (who turned 97 on November 11) been given the Key to the City of Ottawa and is an Officer of the Order of Canada. This year he was given the Lifetime Aboriginal Achievement Award. The vision which he promotes is supported by all of the Algonquin Communities, which he and Douglas Cardinal toured several years ago. World-renowned Canadian First Nations architect Douglas Cardinal, who built the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau and the Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, was engaged to develop plans in 2004, and these visionary plans stand ready for implementation.

DISCUSSION

Ottawa sits on traditional Algonquin territory, and this confluence of the Ottawa, Gatineau and Rideau Rivers has long served as a sacred meeting ground of the Asinabka, and so it is logical that the Algonquin Nation would be the Host Nation of the National Indigenous Centre, which will draw together and celebrate all of Canada's Indigenous peoples. This will be similar to the way that the Four Host First Nations in British Columbia, whose traditional territories hosted the Olympic Games, became the Host Nations for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

The Assembly of First Nations are fully supportive of this initiative, as is MP Paul Dewar, who is MP for the riding (Ottawa Centre) which contains Victoria Island - he has spoken for it twice in the House of Commons. Although support for the project is almost universal, no-one has taken the lead to make it happen. And so everyone waits. It will be a deep sadness indeed if Elder Commanda is not able to walk its halls some day.

Besides the many ways that this National Indigenous Centre is needed for our first peoples, it will also create a tourism draw for the region, and for business reasons alone this would be a good investment for the Ottawa-Gatineau region. As well as being good for the City, this project will be good for the Province of Ontario, the Federal Government, and all Canadians. But most importantly it will be good for our indigenous peoples, the descendents of those who showed

Champlain the way to survive, to travel up the great Ottawa River to the continent, to all of what became Canada. As the 400th anniversary of that event approaches in 2013, the Federal Government, the Cities of Ottawa-Gatineau, and all Canadians, will be able to show appreciation and recognition that Canada's first peoples are still here, still amongst us, still with rich culture and wisdom to share, if we will only listen, and provide an appropriate national venue in the Capital.

CONSULTATION

There has been no public consultation on this topic, however, there has been previous media coverage regarding the proposal for a National Indigenous Centre on Victoria Island.

LEGAL/RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This report asks that the City of Ottawa support the establishment of a National Indigenous Centre in Ottawa, and has no legal or risk management implications for the City of Ottawa.

CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

This report is consistent with the City's Strategic Plan as the National Indigenous Centre would recognize the contributions made to the development of the City of Ottawa by its indigenous peoples.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the City of Ottawa, as the establishment of a National Indigenous Centre would be a federal initiative.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

A Report on the Vision for the Asinabka National Indigenous Centre

DISPOSITION

Upon approval by Ottawa City Council, the City's endorsement would be communicated to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Indian Affairs & Northern Development, the Minister responsible for the NCC, the Chair and CEO of the NCC, the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Tourism & Culture (Ontario), the City of Gatineau, and to the Circle of All Nations.