Aboriginal Canada Portal

Portail des Autochtones au Canada

Questions and Answers about the Aboriginal Canada Portal

www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca

Q: There is already a great deal of information about Aboriginal peoples on the Internet. Why do we need an *Aboriginal Canada Portal*?

A: One of the key objectives of the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* is to use the power of the Internet to group on-line information and services into categories that are meaningful to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

The Government of Canada and the Aboriginal partners involved in the development of the *Portal* further recognized that, in order to find the necessary information and services on a wide variety of subjects, their clients and members had to search through an array of websites to get what they needed.

Because the material was not integrated into a single Internet gateway, people had to spend a lot of time searching for the information and often weren't able to access complete information. The *Portal* has all of this information in a single on-line window, is easy to use and gives users much quicker access to a wide variety of information on subjects for and about Aboriginal people in Canada.

However, the *Portal* is about more than just easy access to information. It's about using the Internet to discuss ideas and share successes. It's about using the Internet to sell products and services, to promote Aboriginal tourism, culture and heritage — in Canada and around the world. It's also about e-government and people working together to strengthen communities, people and economies.

Council for the
Advancement of Native
Development Officers

Conseil pour
l'avancement des agents
de développement autochtones

Native Women's
Association
of Canada

Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Métis National
Council

Ralliement national
des Métis

Congress of
Aboriginal Peoples

Congrès des
peuples autochtones

Assembly of
First Nations

Assemblée des
Premières Nations

Inuit Tapirisat
of Canada

Inuit Tapirisat
du Canada

Government of Canada **Gouvernement du Canada**

A PARTNERSHIP SITE
UN SITE CONÇU EN PARTENARIAT

Canada

Q: Who is the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* for?

A: The target audiences for the *Portal* are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

In 1999, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) brought together the key federal partners offering information and services to Aboriginal people in Canada: Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Industry Canada, Health Canada, Heritage Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), as well as six national Aboriginal organizations: the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapirisat Canada of Canada, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers — to develop the *Aboriginal Canada Portal*. INAC is chair of the *Portal Working Group* with these Aboriginal and federal partners as key members.

The structure of the site consistently uses subjects and information categories that have been validated by the Aboriginal organizations, including: national Aboriginal organizations; economic development; business; claims and treaties; learning, employment; environment and natural resources; health and social services; housing and infrastructure; justice and policing; as well as language, heritage and culture.

The site's key features include a search engine, electronic service delivery of some government programs, on-line publications, a program database, and a user support 'help desk'. In total, the *Portal* has more than 7,500 links to information for and about Aboriginal people in Canada with over 15,000 additional pages indexed for a comprehensive search.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has also undertaken a rigorous user feedback strategy to ensure that the site's structure, features and language are relevant to Aboriginal people in Canada. A series of focus sessions were conducted to elicit essential feedback, and there is also an on-line client feedback form on the site. The number of visitors to the site will be tracked, and traffic levels to determine the most popular programs and services will also be measured.

Q: How did the partnership effort begin, and who is involved?

A: The *Portal* is the result of two years of work and was designed in partnership with:

• National Aboriginal Organizations (Assembly of First Nations, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapirisat Canada of Canada, Native Women's Association of Canada, and Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers); and
• Federal Government Departments (Industry Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Privy Council Office, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, Public Works and Government Services Canada).

Q: How will the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* evolve?

A: Members of the *Aboriginal Canada Portal Working Group* have agreed to continue to manage the development and expansion of the *Portal*. Partners will promote the *Portal*'s URL and benefits to their members and in their day-to-day outreach activities. National and regional workshops will also be held in the future to identify and fill any gaps.

Furthermore, visitors to the *Portal* are continuously able to provide on-line feedback on how the site can be improved and what content they would like to see added. As well, new electronic services and features will be added to the site as partners roll them out.

Q: Why are Aboriginal organizations and the Government spending so much time and money on an Internet portal when so many Aboriginal people in Canada don't have the basics like adequate housing, education and health-care services?

A: The *Speech from the Throne* reaffirmed the Government of Canada's commitment to social justice for Aboriginal people in Canada and to bring real and practical improvements to the lives of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.

The *Speech from the Throne* also reiterated the Government's commitment to make Canada one of the most electronically connected countries in the world. The government is committed to working with Aboriginal people in Canada to close the digital divide and make sure they are full participants in the new Information Age economy.

Through the *Connecting Aboriginal people* in Canada strategy, the efforts of national Aboriginal leaders and the example of dynamic Aboriginal information and technology companies, more and more Aboriginal people in Canada are realizing the benefits of the Internet and information and communications technologies.

With the launch of the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* — and through other initiatives like Aboriginal SchoolNet, the Community Access Program and the recently announced Broad Band Task Force – the government and national Aboriginal organizations are taking important steps to help Aboriginal people in Canada share in the rewards of the 21st century economy.

Participation in the new economy technologies like the Internet, e-commerce and tele-learning will translate into stronger communities, peoples and economies for Aboriginal people in Canada.

The *Portal* is just one important component of the *Connecting Aboriginal people in Canada* strategy. The Strategy will address the digital divide that separates urban residents from those living in rural, remote and northern communities.

The small Aboriginal communities which stand to benefit the most from the Internet may be the last to have these services available to them without their advocacy by Aboriginal leaders and the involvement of the Government of Canada.

Access to the Internet will provide the foundation for improved services such as distance learning and tele-health, as well as provide small Aboriginal businesses with access to broader markets and tourists the world over.

A bold vision, a coherent strategy and strong partnerships will lead to full participation in the digital economy and increased prosperity for Aboriginal people in Canada. By working together – like we have done to develop the *Portal* – government and Aboriginal leaders will ensure a strong Aboriginal presence in the today's networked economy.

Q: How many Aboriginal people in Canada have access to a computer and the Internet to use the *Portal*?

A: Currently, over two thirds of identified First Nations have access to the Internet. That is, access at the band office. Connectivity for individual residences on reserves varies, much as connectivity varies in other communities across Canada.

While no exact data exists for the number of Aboriginal people in Canada living off reserve who have access to the Internet, an Angus-Reid poll (March 2000) found that two in three Canadians have Internet access. Clearly, like other Canadians, there is a growing demand among the Aboriginal population for electronic services and they will be better served as a result.

In part, the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* responds to the Government of Canada's *Government On-Line (GOL)* initiative, a new service-delivery vision which aims at delivering services and information to Canadians in the ways that are meaningful to Canadians. The vision ensures that Canadians can still get access by telephone, in-person, and through hard copy documents.

Q: What is the difference between a portal and a website?

A *Portal* is larger in scope than a stand-alone site, as it is a single window to a vast array of on-line links to information and services of common interest. The information in the *Aboriginal Canada Portal* is organized and displayed with the user in mind to make access to this rich resource as quick and easy as possible.

The *Aboriginal Canada Portal* includes links to more than 25 national Aboriginal organizations, 25 federal government departments and agencies with Aboriginal mandates, all provincial/territorial governments and agencies with Aboriginal responsibilities, as well as related Aboriginal community information on everything from news to business to people.

The *Portal* provides Aboriginal people in Canada with another way to access the information and services they currently can only receive in person or by telephone . The *Portal* is a unique opportunity for Aboriginal organizations and individuals to incorporate new communication technologies into the way they do business, live and learn.