



# NEWS RELEASE

## Oyate Tipi Cumini Yape

606 Selkirk Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba

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April 15, 2004

For Immediate Release

## PARTNERS OPEN FURNITURE DEPOT THAT ASSISTS WOMEN ESCAPING ABUSE AND POVERTY

**WINNIPEG, MANITOBA** — Today's grand opening of the Oyate Tipi Cumini Yape furniture warehouse celebrates a unique partnership between the governments of Canada, Manitoba and Winnipeg; BMO Financial Group; the United Way of Winnipeg; and several community-based women's organizations. Together, they are helping women and their children escape poverty and abuse situations by providing used furniture and household goods for their new homes. Since opening the new site at 606 Selkirk Avenue, Oyate Tipi has already helped 130 + families rebuild their lives.

Oyate Tipi Cumini Yape, a joint initiative of 10 community-based women's organizations, accepts and stores donations of gently-used furniture and household goods. These items are distributed to women referred to Oyate Tipi by partner agencies, which includes residential facilities and crisis shelters. The warehouse project was made possible with a \$415,929 contribution from the governments of Canada, Manitoba and Winnipeg, through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI). The funds are from Canada's Urban Aboriginal component of the National Homelessness Initiative. The building was donated by the BMO Financial Group.

"This project is a fine example of partnerships that work effectively when we all have a common goal," said the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for Homelessness. "All of these women's groups that make up Oyate Tipi have come together to help women and children escape situations of poverty and abuse. With the support they are providing, these women will be able to not only rebuild their homes, but also lead healthy, independent lives."

"Thanks to the coordinated efforts of these community-based groups, a unique approach to strengthening the lives of vulnerable women and children has been developed," said the Honourable Christine Melnick, Manitoba Minister of Family Services and Housing. "This support, through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, will help those in need begin to move toward self-sufficiency."

"This warehouse will help women and children who are leaving abusive situations get established with the necessities of life," said Acting Deputy Mayor Mike Pagtagkan, on behalf of Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray. "When people find themselves in a desperate situation, they need the support of the community to give them hope. This facility will be providing a practical service which may make it possible for women to find a safe and independent life for themselves and their children."

### Donations being accepted

Oyate Tipi Cumini Yape is Dakota for "where the community lives, sharing and recycling." The community partners include Alpha House, Elizabeth Fry Society, Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin (Ikwe), L'Entre-temps des Franco-Manitobaines, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Native Women's Transition Centre, North End Women's Centre, Osborne House, Wahbung Abinoonjiag, and Women in Second Stage Housing (W.I.S.H.). Only these partners can refer women to Oyate Tipi.

"While we would like to help every woman and child in need, we have very few resources and it is important people know that only the women who are participating in programs offered by our partner agencies may be referred to Oyate Tipi," said Lucille Bruce, Co-Founder of Oyate Tipi. "We desperately need donations of furniture and household goods such as beds, cribs, dressers, dishes, bedding and other essentials. All donations are gratefully appreciated."

The United Way facilitated discussions between the BMO Financial Group and the partnering organizations, which resulted in the donation of a vacant bank building for the warehouse. This was the first donation of its type in Manitoba. Staff from the BMO Financial Group also held the first donations drive to collect goods for the warehouse. The warehouse is also home to United Way's *Coats for Kids* program that accepts donations of good quality used winter coats for distribution to children whose families do not have sufficient resources to purchase adequate winter wear. "BMO Financial Group is committed to looking at ways to invest in and strengthen the communities in which we do business. We are proud to support Oyate Tipi Cumini Yape and look forward to working with them to find new and creative ways to provide support," said Dave Gemmell, Executive Assistant for Manitoba for the BMO Financial Group.

"United Way's experience is that the resources required to make great things happen exist all around us – we just have to know how to connect them. We're thrilled we could bring the BMO Financial Group and the women's organizations together to make Oyate Tipi possible," said Jo Wright, Director of Resource Development for United Way. "The project is a shining example of what can be accomplished when government, the private sector and community organizations work together."

"United Way has assisted us almost since the beginning," said Annetta Armstrong, Coordinator of Oyate Tipi. "Not only did they help us form partnerships with the private sector, but they also offered us support every step of the way and continue to do so."

The WHHI funding enabled the Oyate Tipi partners to undertake renovations to convert the building into a furniture warehouse, purchase delivery vans, equipment and supplies and to hire staff for the daily operations.

Anyone who would like to donate gently used household goods and furniture can call the Oyate Tipi Donation Line at 589-2265.

For more information on Oyate Tipi, visit their website at <http://www.oyatetipi.com>

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