

# Swift Current Friendship Centre celebrates grand opening

The friendly atmosphere of the Swift Current Friendship Centre has now been officially unveiled.

The Friendship Centre held a grand opening ceremony on Wednesday, with the doors to the 18<sup>th</sup> Friendship Centre in the province formally opened.

Approximately 60 people attended the opening ceremonies.

The dream to open a Friendship Centre in Swift Current began a number of years ago, but only in the past few years has this idea been moving closer to reality.

Friendship Centre will have a focus on youth programming, allowing youth to learn about their heritage and culture while giving them a place to keep them safe and off the streets.

"The native people you don't see them that much around here. They're in the corner, they're not out in the open. They're kind of shy to say who they are," explained board member Earl Monkman.

In the future, with more funding, they are aiming to add a computer-aided homework program for youth. Many kids, when they get off the school bus, do not have access to computers or someone to assist them with homework projects.

In building a fun, safe place for the kids to come, their first two organized youth events have been a trip to Sask Landing for a tour, plus a pizza and karaoke night.

Future plans include adding programming to help teach first nations culture, including building tee pees, making dream catchers, and teaching traditional language.

Their efforts are designed to improve understanding of native culture, and change some misconceptions people have about first nations people.

"We're trying to instill in the kids that that's not the way it is," Carol Low said.

The Friendship Centre has an open door policy, with any nationality welcome to visit and participate.

Wednesday's grand opening featured a traditional native blessing in Cree by Winston McKay, a video message by NHL hall of famer Bryan Trottier, and musical entertainment by Navajo.

The Friendship Centre is run on grants but they will be holding a series of fundraisers in the future to help them expand their services.

*Press Release Date:  
The Southwest Booster  
October 9, 2004*