

For Media Enquiries, contact:

Mediatonic PR  
Shelley Mantei 604.736.8646  
shelley@mediatonicpr.com



## **Circle of Eagles Lodge Commemorates 40 Years of Transforming the Aboriginal Community**

**Vancouver, BC (May 10, 2011)** – Circle of Eagles Lodge Society celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Monday, May 30, 2011 from 11:00am-5:00pm PST at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, 1607 East Hastings St. The Circle of Eagles Lodge is a community residential facility, which has provided care and custody to over 1,500 Aboriginal men conditionally, released from the federal institutions.

Invited speakers include: representatives from Corrections Service Canada; the four First Nations' local Chiefs and Shawn Atleo, Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations; Hon. Libby Davies, MP; Hon. Hedy Fry, MP; Jenny Kwan, MLA; and his Worship, Mayor Gregor Robertson. A highlight of the event will be a documentary of Circle of Eagles Lodge's 40 years of transforming the Aboriginal Community; and includes commentary from Marjorie White, who pioneered not only the Circle of Eagles Lodge for 15 years, but over the past 50 years has contributed to almost every Aboriginal organization in the Vancouver area (many of which she was a founding member).

"A definitive factor in Circle of Eagles' success is that it is a culturally appropriate program. Elders and volunteers lead our Aboriginal brothers and sisters through sweat lodges and smudging ceremonies to talking circles combined with traditional employment training programs to addiction counseling," shared Marjorie White, Elder and Founding President of COELS. "One of the unique programs we are most proud of is our 'Healing Canoe Journeys' participated in with both correctional officers and our brothers. The experience is extremely transformational for both parties."

The organization is run by Aboriginals for Aboriginals, and assists ex-offenders in becoming more productive, contributing members of society. Over the span of 40 years Circle of Eagles Lodge has been recognized by many of our Nations dignitaries for its work to reduce the number of Aboriginal repeat offenders through its highly effective residential halfway house and rehabilitation services. This is of great importance given that:

- While Aboriginal people comprise 3.8% of the Canadian population, as of April 25, 2010, 17.9% of offenders serving federal sentences (20.6% of incarcerated offenders and 13.7% of offenders on conditional release) are of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ancestry.

As part of the celebration, we will honor past and current partners & volunteers for their unwavering support in the rehabilitation of inmates; with special testimonies from past Lodge residents whose stories are inspiring and speak to the positive role they now play in our communities.

- 30 -

**About The Circle of Eagles Lodge Society** [www.circleofeagles.com](http://www.circleofeagles.com)

COELS was incorporated May 28, 1970 and carries out its work in the Lower Mainland of BC. The society provides consistent and culturally appropriate services and support for incarcerated people of native ancestry, native people on parole or probation, or referrals from the courts with a goal towards a successful re-entry into a community setting. The society has in recent years expanded services to Aboriginal youth, our annual Canoe Healing Journeys and to Aboriginal women who are homeless and also leaving the federal institutions.