



Press release

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**Aboriginal leader to receive first annual Equitas Award for
Human Rights Education**

Gala cocktail to honour Phil Fontaine

Montreal, March 16, 2010 – On Thursday, March 18, 2010, Mr. Phil Fontaine will become the first recipient of the Equitas Award for Human Rights Education from Montreal-based organization Equitas. This new annual juried award recognizes and celebrates exceptional contributions made in the field of human rights education. The award will be presented to Mr. Fontaine at a gala cocktail event hosted by Equitas.

Mr. Fontaine is being recognized for his record of achievement in raising awareness concerning the importance of human rights to the lives of all Canadians. In particular, his work has helped to advance equality, social justice and respect for human dignity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

“We are very proud to be awarding Mr. Fontaine with the first Equitas Award for Human Rights Education,” says Executive Director Ian Hamilton. “For over 40 years, Equitas has played a key role in human rights education in Canada and around the world. It is a great honour to be able to highlight some of the outstanding work done by Mr. Fontaine in promoting the human rights of Canada’s aboriginal communities and to share his successes with the community.”

Award Ceremony

When: Thursday, March 18, 2010, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Where: Tudor Hall, Ogilvy's 5th floor 1307 Sainte-Catherine Street West (corner de la Montagne)

Exceptional Achievements

Phil Fontaine, a dedicated and highly respected figure in Canada, has been instrumental in facilitating change and advancement for First Nations people from the time he was first elected to public office as Chief, at the young age of 28. Fontaine has just retired following the completion of an unprecedented third term as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. He is a proud member of the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba and still plays an active role in the support of his community.

“I am pleased to be coming to Montreal to receive the first annual Equitas Award for Human Rights Education”, says Phil Fontaine. “My life's work has been dedicated to closing the gap in quality of life of First Nation people in comparison to other Canadians and I am both humbled and honoured to be recognized by such a well-established organization as Equitas.”

Mr. Fontaine has successfully helped to:

- Secure a public apology from the Government of Canada for abuses committed under the Indian Residential School system [2008];
- Negotiate the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement including more than \$5 billion in compensation for survivors and the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission [2005];
- Negotiate of the Kelowna Accords, agreements designed to improve living conditions and education standards for Aboriginal people [2005];
- Raise global awareness of current and past injustices and human rights abuses experienced by Canada's Aboriginal peoples;
- Open the way for a new and more constructive dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians on long-standing human rights abuses;
- Campaign for important changes in Canada's policies and practices that reinforced social justice for and helped restore dignity to Aboriginal Peoples.

For more information on Equitas, visit www.equitas.org.

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To arrange an interview, to attend the event or for more information, please contact:

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Mr. Fontaine will be available in Montreal on March 18th after 2:00 pm or via telephone earlier during the week (March 15-18).