Standing Senate Committee
on Aboriginal Peoples

Comité sénatorial permanent
des peuples autochtones

Urban Aboriginal Youth:
An Action Plan for Change

FINAL REPORT

The Honourable Thelma Chalifoux
Chair

The Honourable Janis G. Johnson
Deputy Chair

October 2003

Ce document est disponible en français.

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ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate*, Tuesday, 29 October 2002:

The Honourable Senator Chalifoux moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Milne:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, pursuant to the input it has received from urban Aboriginal people and organizations, be authorized to examine and report upon issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth in Canada. In particular, the Committee shall be authorized to examine access, provision and delivery of services; policy and jurisdictional issues; employment and education; access to economic opportunities; youth participation and empowerment; and other related matters;

That the papers and evidence received and taken on the subject and the work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples during the First Session of the Thirty-seventh Parliament be referred to the Committee; and

That the Committee report to the Senate no later than 27 June 2003.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate*, Thursday, 3 June 2003:

The Honourable Senator Chalifoux, seconded by the Honourable Senator Rompkey, P.C.

That, notwithstanding the Order of the Senate adopted on 29 October 2002, the date for the final report by the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in its study of issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth be extended from 27 June 2003, to 30 October 2003.

After debate,

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Paul C. Bélisle

Clerk of the Senate

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate*, Thursday, 27 September 2001:

The Honourable Senator Chalifoux moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Christensen:

THAT the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, pursuant to the input it has received from urban Aboriginal people and organizations, be authorized to examine and report upon issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth in Canada. In particular, the Committee shall be authorized to examine access, provision and delivery of services; policy and jurisdictional issues; employment and education; access to economic opportunities; youth participation and empowerment; and other related matters;

THAT the Committee report to the Senate no later than 28 June 2002; and

THAT the Committee be authorized, notwithstanding customary practice, to table its report to the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not sitting, and that a report so tabled be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate*, Tuesday, 11 June 2002:

The Honourable Senator Chalifoux moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Milne:

That notwithstanding the Order of the Senate adopted on 27 September 2001, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, which was authorized to examine issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth, be empowered to present its final report no later than 19 December 2002.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Paul C. Bélisle

Clerk of the Senate

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ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past eighteen months the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples has been examining issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth in Canada with a view to developing an "***Action Plan for Change***." The Committee held 44 meetings. Most of these meetings were public sessions during which the Committee heard from over 128 witnesses. In addition, in March 2003 the Committee travelled to Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver during which the Committee heard from several Aboriginal organizations and service providers and conducted a series of Aboriginal youth roundtables.

Canada has not adequately met the needs of Aboriginal[1] youth living in urban areas. The Committee's report, however, is not intended to be yet another study on Aboriginal people. The recommendations contained in this report map out short and long term strategies that address the *aspirations* of youth, laying out the foundations upon which their potential can be nurtured, supported and realized. To be successful in achieving these goals, the Committee believes that solutions need to be proactive and preventative, rather than coming into action only when a problem or need becomes acute.

The Committee feels that its recommendations meet the objectives the Committee set for itself at the outset of its work:

- to formulate a detailed and concrete ***plan of action*** to support the social, cultural and economic well being of urban Aboriginal youth; and

- to develop a strategy for reform that is proactive, positive and forward-looking.

The Committee's report makes 19 recommendations. Together, these recommendations form the basis of the Committee's **Action Plan for Change**; grouped into the following four areas:

- **Policy and Jurisdiction**

  Recommendations on restructuring the current jurisdictional and policy framework that currently limits federal government responsibility (and the majority of programs and services) strictly to First Nations people living on reserve. Recommendations, particularly in the area of post-secondary education and Métis rights, break with past policy by moving beyond status-based restrictions and in recognizing that current Aboriginal geographic identities must be reflected in federal policy initiatives.

(1) Unless otherwise specified, the term Aboriginal is used throughout the report to denote the Inuit, Métis and First Nations (status and non-status) peoples of Canada.

- **Program and Service Delivery**

  Recommendations to enhance the ways in which urban Aboriginal programming is conceived, designed and delivered. Key principles for service delivery reform are detailed.

- **Partnerships**

  Recommendations that strengthen the federal role in providing leadership on urban Aboriginal issues and facilitating intergovernmental mechanisms to address policy and program concerns of urban Aboriginal people and youth.

- **Urban Aboriginal Youth Initiatives**

  Recommendations to provide a weave of *positive* supports for Aboriginal youth living in, or coming to, cities. These measures move away from the current "crisis intervention model" and instead seek to create real opportunities for Aboriginal youth in order that they can contribute *meaningfully* to their communities and broader society as well.

ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

1.1 Short and Medium Term Actionable Items

- Remove status-based restrictions to make post-secondary student support available to all Aboriginal youth, including the Métis and non-Status Indians.

- Establish a national "clearing house" of Aboriginal youth programs and best practices. This must be available to service providers, community organizations and governments.

- Establish Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres in urban centres with a significant Aboriginal youth population.

- Provide culturally appropriate urban transition programming for Aboriginal youth who move to urban centres, linking services, wherever possible, to communities of origin.

- Create a national Urban Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Fund.

- Develop a national strategy with specific measures to address high school dropout rates among Aboriginal youth, including measures targeting parent awareness.

- Implement a public awareness campaign for youth and pre-teens to address sexual health and practices, pregnancy and parenting.

- Dedicate resources to community-based youth programs which promote sound parenting skills.

- Ensure culturally appropriate Safe Houses are established in high-risk cities for youth who wish to exit gang life.

- Remove status-based restrictions so that the federal government's National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program can be accessed by all Aboriginal youth, irrespective of status.

- Establish culturally appropriate Aboriginal youth substance abuse treatment centres in urban areas with a significant Aboriginal youth population.

- Ensure employment and training programs provide long-term strategic training for Aboriginal youth in accredited programs.

- Dedicate additional financial resources to the urban and youth component of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy.

- Encourage partnerships between the private sector and Aboriginal youth.

- Extend and expand the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC) Initiative.

1.2 Medium and Long Term Actionable Items

- Recognize the portability of First Nations rights and develop guidelines to ensure equitable access to programs and services for residents living off reserve.

- The federal government must enter into formal negotiations to clarify and resolve outstanding jurisdiction and rights issues concerning the Métis people of Canada.

- The federal government must exercise a leadership role in coordinating multi-lateral program and policy initiatives for urban Aboriginal people.

- The federal government, through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, must develop formal intergovernmental mechanisms to address broad policy and program concerns.

- The federal government collaborate with urban Aboriginal youth, through its Urban Aboriginal Strategy, to develop policy and program initiatives for urban Aboriginal youth.

The Committee believes that a genuine window of opportunity exists to implement the kind of positive change needed to ensure another generation of Aboriginal youth is not sacrificed on the altar of narrow policy thinking. The Committee has worked out a realistic plan of action, and detailed concrete steps, which, if implemented in a serious and dedicated fashion by the federal government, can lead to meaningful reform and long lasting solutions. In addition, due to the jurisdictional issues relating to Aboriginal people who reside off reserve and in urban areas, the Committee recognizes that several of the measures outlined will require close collaboration among various levels of governments and must include the substantive participation of Aboriginal groups to be successful. In that spirit of cooperation, the Committee anticipates the thoughtful response of those who wish to continue working to achieve the aspirations of urban Aboriginal youth.

URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH
ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE

PART THREE:
THE CONTEMPORARY JURISDICTIONAL FRAMEWORK

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in collaboration with First Nations:

- **Develop procedures and guidelines recognizing the portability of rights of First Nations people.**

- **Guidelines and procedures must include estimates for the necessary financial resources required to provide equitable access to programs and services to resident and non-resident members.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government must enter into formal negotiations with the appropriate Métis organizations to clarify and resolve outstanding jurisdictional and rights issues of the Métis people of Canada.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government must ensure the eligibility criteria for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) be broadened to include all Aboriginal groups irrespective of status.**

- **The budget for the PSSSP must be enhanced to correspond to the increased levels of applicants that will result from the removal of status-based restrictions.**

- **Funding for the PSSSP must be appropriately indexed to correspond to rising tuition fees and the growth in the Aboriginal youth population.**

PART FOUR:
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government must conduct a thorough review of programs available to Aboriginal youth, identifying gaps and duplication in programming.**

- **The federal government establish and appropriately fund a national date base to act as a "clearing house" to collect, share, monitor and disseminate information on successful youth programs, initiatives, best practices and youth role models.**

- **Governments, service providers, community organizations and youth should have access to the "clearing house."**

- **Based on the information collected, annual reports should be prepared to assist governments and service providers develop and support more effectively Aboriginal youth programming in urban areas.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government should ensure the following principles are applied to programs that they fund for the delivery of services to urban Aboriginal youth:

- **Involve to the greatest extent possible urban Aboriginal youth or their appropriate representative organizations in the identification of needs, priority setting, program design and service delivery.**

- **To the greatest extent possible, programs be developed locally with a high degree of Aboriginal involvement and ownership.**

- **Funding be guaranteed for sufficient time as to allow the program to achieve its objectives.**

- **There be flexible funding arrangements to minimize the administrative burden on participating Aboriginal organizations.**

- **To the greatest extent possible, and where appropriate, funding be provided directly to urban Aboriginal service providers in order to lessen administrative costs;**

- **Resources should be dedicated to Aboriginal youth capacity and leadership building.**

- **Explore the potential for pooling program funding with any complementary federal programs, other levels of government or appropriate organizations.**

- **Include evaluation processes that incorporate community feedback.**

- **Identify the extent to which programs overlap or duplicate services provided by other levels of government and action proposed to address this, if required.**

- **Where programs are delivered by mainstream agencies with a significant Aboriginal client base, strive to employ appropriately trained Aboriginal staff and provide non-Aboriginal staff with cross-cultural training.**

- **Provide sustained funding for pilot projects that have demonstrated success and integrate these initiatives into departmental practice.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

By virtue of its fundamental, constitutional and fiduciary relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples:

- **The federal government should take a leadership role in coordinating multi-lateral program and policy initiatives for urban Aboriginal people.**

- **The federal government, through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, should act to facilitate the development of formal intergovernmental mechanisms to address the broad policy concerns of urban Aboriginal people in Canada and break down existing silos in program development and service delivery.**

- **Intergovernmental mechanisms must include and engage appropriate urban Aboriginal organizations.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

By virtue of the success of the Urban Aboriginal Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre (UMAYC) Initiative and its importance to urban Aboriginal

youth, the federal government, through the Minister of Canadian Heritage, should:

- **Continue its support for the UMAYC Initiative by committing sustained, long-term funding for the initiative.**

- **Funding allocations for the UMAYC Initiative should be increased so that urban Aboriginal communities and youth are better able to build upon its successes.**

PART FIVE: THE NEEDS OF YOUTH

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, in collaboration with its provincial counterparts and appropriate urban Aboriginal youth representatives and agencies, should provide capital funding for the establishment of Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres in urban communities where there is a significant Aboriginal youth population. Centres should be located in areas where they can be readily accessed by youth.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal organizations, should establish community-based, culturally appropriate urban Aboriginal youth transition programs. Efforts should be made to link Aboriginal youth transition services to reserve and rural communities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, through the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, should establish and fund an Urban Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Initiative. The Initiative should promote sport and recreation programs that are:

- **Community-based, delivered and designed.**

- **Sustainable and long-term rather than of limited duration.**

- **Designed to build the capacity Aboriginal youth through instruction in recreation programming, leadership development and life skill training.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government, through the Minister of Canadian Heritage, should provide dedicated and sustained funding for arts programming targeted specifically to Aboriginal youth in urban areas.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, in cooperation with provincial, territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations, develop a strategy to reduce the Aboriginal youth truancy rate in schools.

Such strategies should include those targeting:

- **Aboriginal parents and highlighting to them the benefits of their children's regular and ongoing attendance at school.**

- **Elders, and other community leaders, in the planning and implementation of such strategies on behalf of Aboriginal youth.**

- **Specific measures to address high drop out rates during critical transition periods.**

- **Specific measures to promote Aboriginal culture and history in mainstream educational institutions.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government, through the Minister of Health, must act to ensure that off-reserve and urban Aboriginal organizations benefit equally from the federal government's FAS/FAE Initiative.**

- **Federal funding allocated for the FAS/FAE Initiative must be increased rather than redirected from reserve communities in order to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal communities.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, through the Minister of Health, and in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal organizations and youth representatives should:

- **Design and implement a public awareness campaign for Aboriginal youth and pre-teens to address youth sexual health, encourage healthy sexual practices, and the prevention of teen pregnancies.**

- **Support community-based education initiatives for youth and pre-teens on sex, sexuality, pregnancy and parenting.**

- **Dedicate sustained resources for community-based youth programs that promote parenting skills.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The federal government, in collaboration with provincial and municipal governments, and in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, support the establishment of Safe Houses to assist urban Aboriginal youth exit gang life. Initiatives should be targeted to "high-risk" cities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government should act to extend its National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program to include all Aboriginal youth, irrespective of status, residing in urban areas.**

- **Funding should be allocated for the establishment of urban Aboriginal youth treatment centres where there is a significant Aboriginal population and be located in areas where they can be readily accessed by youth.**

- **Treatment centres and services for youth should be age and culturally appropriate.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **Federal programs aimed at increasing labour market participation of Aboriginal youth be should be designed to provide long-term, strategic training in accredited programs for youth.**

- **Funding allocated to the youth and urban component of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy should be increased.**

- **The federal government, in collaboration with all principal stakeholders, facilitate forums and initiatives to encourage partnerships between urban Aboriginal youth and the private sector.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- **The federal government, under its Urban Aboriginal Strategy, develop and fund specific initiatives for young Aboriginal people on the basis that they are one of the most "at risk" groups.**

- **These initiatives must be designed and developed in collaboration with urban Aboriginal youth.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The agencies and departments of the federal government involved in coordinating and implementing the recommended actions contained in this report prepare an annual review of their actions and progress in this regard and table it before this Committee.

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Searching for Visions II*

These kids they're gonna be okay
When they're ready, they gonna take us places we never dreamed of
Man, the universe is coming at them
A million miles an hour
Incredible dreams they must have
The worlds they have travelled already

These young travellers they'll be okay
And when they're ready
The stories they'll tell us
The worlds they'll take us
I can hardly wait

Duncan Mercredi – 1995

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* *Searching for Vision II* written by Duncan Mercredi, Pemmican Publications, Winnipeg. Reprinted with permission.

URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Imagine how you would feel to be set adrift alone in a kayak in the Arctic Ocean …

Mr. Franco Sheatiapik Buscemi,
National Inuit Youth Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

For many young Aboriginal people, cities have been their only home. Some are second and third generation urban dwellers. Despite systemic barriers and personal challenges which they may face, many manage urban life successfully. For other Aboriginal youth, city life can be an overwhelming experience. Their foothold is uncertain; their future uncertain. While cities may seem to offer great promise, countless arrive ill-prepared to take advantage of these opportunities, and promise eventually falls to despair. Unfortunately, this is a familiar scenario faced by many young Aboriginal people who come to cities seeking to improve their lives:

> It is like looking through stained glass; the promise of moving to a city is so rich – there is employment; there are opportunities. It is a huge difference. I come from a town of 7,000 people. The prospect of a better or a different life in the cities is one that is very promising. However, when you get to the city you find out that even to be a waiter you need experience. Even to be the low man on the totem pole, so to speak, you still need the experience and the relevant training. The people and the youth I have met have come to the city in search of that promise. It is not there. Many of them become stuck in the city over a period of time. They follow their bad habits in the city.(2)

Far too often the lives of these young people become just another negative statistic. We must resist the temptation to read these figures idly and search ourselves for a deeper understanding of the real suffering and pain that exists behind those numbers. These youth may well be our doctors, poets, artists, leaders, and educators, and unless we come together to address the structural inadequacies that underpin those grim statistics, they will be lost to their communities and to us forever. Minus their potential, we are diminished. Moral imperative, our own self-interest, and simple compassion compel us to ensure that another generation of Aboriginal youth will not be prevented from realizing their promise.

(2) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, Second Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 5 February 2003, Mr. Roy McMahon, Youth Coordinator, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

When we first began our examination into issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth, we could not have imagined the unshakeable resilience displayed by many of these young people in the face of so many daunting challenges. We were impressed by their strength, their quiet determination, their honesty in talking so frankly about their lives, and their sincere desire to overcome their circumstances, however difficult it may seem at times.

A report released by the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Law Commission of Canada argued that the aimlessness of Aboriginal youth, so often manifested in street crime and youth gangs, is more a failure of Canadian society to provide alternative structures than a reflection of the youth themselves.[3] Add to this the fact that the social distress many urban Aboriginal youth experience is a complex interplay of a number of factors. As one witness told the Committee, the lives of Aboriginal youth "are profoundly influenced by both historical injustices and current inequities. Issues facing youth are rooted in a history of colonization, dislocation from their traditional territories, communities and cultural traditions, and the inter-generational impacts of the residential school system."[4]

Recent demographic studies have shown that Aboriginal women, children and youth in cities face particular challenges and are among the most vulnerable. This suggests that program and policy measures aimed at improving the condition of urban Aboriginal people should consider those segments in greatest need. Special consideration should be placed on developing policies and coordinating efforts that respond to the circumstances of Aboriginal women, youth and children in cities. We believe that the federal government must assume a lead role in facilitating, planning and coordinating these efforts.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for governments to ignore the myriad of challenges, needs and issues facing the urban Aboriginal population. Not only do Aboriginal people constitute a significant percentage of urban populations, especially in the western provinces, but on the whole they have higher rates of joblessness, less formal education, more contact with the justice system, and are in poorer health than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

The urban Aboriginal landscape is extremely complex. The continued significance of reserve and rural life to urban Aboriginal residents is evidenced by a pattern of frequent circulation from reserves to urban areas, rather than permanent settlement. Further, the implications of a growing and youthful urban Aboriginal population – both socially and economically marginalized – is also a matter of significant public policy concern. As noted by Peters and Graham, "positive futures for urban areas are intricately tied to positive futures for Aboriginal people."[5]

(3) National Association of Friendship Centres and Law Commission of Canada, *Urban Aboriginal Governance: Re-Fashioning the Dialogue*, 1999, p. 65.

(4) Urban Native Youth Association, *Submission*, p. 4.

(5) Katharine Graham and Evelyn Peters, *Aboriginal Communities and Urban Sustainability*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, December 2002, p. 1.

REFRAMING THE CURRENT DIALOGUE

> *I am convinced that by focusing on a problem, one cannot always solve the problem. One needs to have a sense of what people are trying to achieve and how one wants to move forward.*
>
> ***Professor David Newhouse,***
> **Trent University**

Past literature identifies the issue of Aboriginal urbanization primarily as a social problem. Historically, Aboriginal migration to Canadian cities was viewed with considerable apprehension and many clung to the belief that "an Indian's place is on the reserve."[6] Contemporary reality does not bear this out. Cities are places of deep diversity and home to the majority of Aboriginal peoples. Many Aboriginal youth are dynamic, contributing members of urban life. Moreover, in cities across Canada, the achievements of Aboriginal peoples are challenging these archaic beliefs and breaking negative stereotypes, such as those often portrayed in the media.

There is, as many witnesses told us, a need to start a new conversation: a conversation about achievement, success and vision for the future. Failure to do so, as one witness explained, perpetuates the false view many Aboriginal youth hold of themselves as inferior and inadequate:

> We do not talk in terms of excellence, achievement and success. When we tell students to survive, they do.[7]

Finally, one young Aboriginal woman talked to us about the serious harm that can be inflicted when forced into a reduced mode of being:

> I grew up amongst a bunch of lies. Once I learned the truth, it opened up a whole bunch of doors for me. Young people deserve to know this so that we will stop being ashamed of being native.[8]

The projection of an inferior self-image has perhaps been one of the most powerful weapons of the colonizer in its "conquest" of the New World. The human costs of this assault on the personal dignity of other human beings we reckon to be inestimable. It has carried enormous social costs and continues to do so today.

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(6) In its 1960 submission to the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Indian Affairs, the government of Saskatchewan warned that "the day is not distant when the burgeoning Indian population, now largely confined to reservations, will explode into white communities and present a serious problem indeed." Evidence of this apprehension and, at times hostility, to the presence of Aboriginal people in cities, was noted by a number of other writers.

(7) *Proceedings*, 10 December 2002, David Newhouse, Associate Professor and Chair, Native Studies, Trent University.

(8) *Proceeding* (Vancouver Youth Round Table), 18 March 2003, Ms. Ginger Gosnell, Urban Native Youth Association.

THE COMMITTEE'S APPROACH

Members of this Committee were moved by the testimony of Aboriginal youth, many of whom have had their lives adversely compromised by negative portrayals of themselves in mainstream institutions. The transformative potential of positive images can only reinforce a new reality for Aboriginal youth, and open up for them a world in which they are no longer forced to occupy marginal positions. Rather than stereotyping Aboriginal youth (particularly when in groups) involved in anti-social or self-harming behaviour, we wish to move beyond the near exclusive focus on problems and begin to explore a more constructive approach, one emphasizing the contribution Aboriginal youth now make, and can continue to make, to Canada's future.

REPORT OUTLINE

The Committee's report seeks to address some of the complex jurisdictional, social, economic, and program inequities that keep so many of this country's Aboriginal youth from realizing a brighter future.

- Chapter 2 of the report sets out some of the salient demographic features of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada and its implications for policy-makers.

- Chapter 3 looks at federal and provincial responsibilities for Aboriginal peoples living off reserve and in urban areas. The resulting jurisdictional ambiguity, it is argued, negatively affects the level of services received by this segment of the Aboriginal population. Emerging jurisprudence, demographics and socio-economic indicators underlie the need for a review of federal policy in this regard.

- Chapter 4 presents some of the major challenges facing program development and service delivery for urban Aboriginal youth. Key principles for service delivery reform are outlined.

- Based on the evidence, chapter 5 discusses the needs of urban Aboriginal youth. In this section the Committee brings forward a number of recommendations that, it believes, begin to create positive supports around youth, tap into their talents and recognize their worth.

OTHER RELEVANT INQUIRIES

The breadth of our terms of reference did not allow the Committee to examine all the issues as fully as it wished in the time available. However, many of the issues have been examined in other inquiries and their findings are relevant here.

- The 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* examined the challenges and issues confronting Aboriginal youth and made several recommendations with respect to improving the lives of young Aboriginal people throughout Canada. Of significance, the Commission identified the need for a coherent nation-wide Aboriginal youth policy to better address their specific needs. The Commission argued that because a coordinated policy

approach is missing, programming tends to be reactive, fragmented and scattered. "Unless specific needs of young people are considered," states the Commission, "programs that are inappropriate for their specific circumstances or culture may be initiated, resulting in money being spent but problems remaining unsolved."

- Under the auspices of its *Urban Aboriginal Initiative*, The Canada West Foundation recently released four reports dealing with a range of urban Aboriginal issues. In particular, the reports identified the key challenges facing urban Aboriginal people and their implications for public policy; highlighted strategies and promising practices in addressing the needs of a growing urban Aboriginal population; and looked at ways in which federal, provincial, and municipal governments can work together with Aboriginal organizations to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in major western Canadian cities.

Other inquiries include:

- The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres report on *Urban Aboriginal Child Poverty* and *Tenuous Connections: Urban Aboriginal Youth Sexual Health and Pregnancy*.

- *Taking Pulse*: A special project of the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

- Statistics Canada's 2002 report on *The Health of the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Population*.

- A report by Save the Children Canada on the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth entitled *Sacred Lives*.

- The March 2000 report of *Canadian Council on Social Development on Urban Poverty* identifying socio-economic conditions as contributing to urban Aboriginal poverty.

- *Issues in Urban Corrections for Aboriginal People* (1998), a report prepared for the Solicitor General Canada, provides useful information on the specific needs of urban Aboriginal communities.

Too numerous to mention individually, the Committee has benefited greatly by the significant research work undertaken by Aboriginal organizations and agencies across the country.

DEFINING "URBAN AND "YOUTH"

There has been some discussion about the most appropriate definition of "urban" in the context of the Committee's terms of reference. Countries differ in the way they classify population as "urban" or "rural." Typically, in Canada, a community or settlement with a population of 1,000 or more is considered urban. For the purposes of this report, we have opted to use the formal Statistics Canada's definition for census metropolitan areas which reads as follows: a census metropolitan area (CMA) is a geographic area delineated around an urban core with at least 100, 000 population.

There are 27 CMAs in Canada. The Committee, however, has focused largely on the following 11 urban centres: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal, and Halifax. Reasons for this selection is so we may account for east/west regional differences as well as the large concentrations of Aboriginal youth in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay. Given the magnitude of this undertaking we were unable, in this report, to give as close attention as we might have wished to smaller urban areas – such as Prince Rupert (B.C.) or Prince Albert (SK) – that also have significant Aboriginal youth populations.

Statistics Canada defines youth as those between the ages of 15 to 24 years. Aboriginal organizations have their own categories for defining youth: The National Association of Friendship Centres, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Métis National Council all define "youth"' as being between the ages of 15 to 24. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami employs a broader range. They define "youth" as those between 13 to 29 years. Finally, the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation all define youth as age 18 to 24.

Government programs and services for youth tend to rely upon the Statistics Canada demographic model. In some instances, this can compromise the ability of youth to access much-needed services because they fall outside the federally recognized age category. The application of narrow definitions has created gaps in programming, particularly for those youth between 13-15 years of age, and suggests the need for policy-makers to apply broader definitions.

Who Are Urban Aboriginal Youth?

When talking about urban Aboriginal youth specifically four primary categories can be identified. Each of these categories of urban Aboriginal youth has their own unique needs in successfully adapting to, and living in, cities.

- ***Aboriginal youth born into an urban environment;***
- ***Aboriginal youth who temporarily live in an urban environment for educational, occupational, judicial or health reasons, and who are adjusting to an urban setting;***
- ***Aboriginal youth introduced and/or re-introduced to an urban environment after relocating from their home community (some for the first time, others after a period of time back in their home community; and***
- ***Youth re-entering an urban environment after a period of incarceration, rehabilitation or having lived "off the land" for an extended period.***

CONCLUSION

The Committee hopes that its report will contribute to the promotion of a positive dialogue. It is our strong belief that we must structurally address the ability of Aboriginal youth to make a positive contribution to Canadian society, rather than continue with the perceived notion that they are "problems to be fixed."(9) Witnesses appearing before the Committee were asked to identify possible solutions, successful interventions and best practices that would help youth overcome at least some of the challenges they face on a daily basis. We have been fortunate to benefit, to a very great degree, from their wisdom and wealth of experience. On that note, we turn to our examination into issues affecting Aboriginal youth in urban areas.

(9) *Proceedings*, 11 February 2003, John Kim Bell, Founder and President, National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

PART II: SETTING THE CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The received wisdom in mainstream Canadian thought appears to be that an average Aboriginal person lives on reserve and away from major urban centres. This image is reinforced by dominant images in Canadian media and popular culture that tend to concentrate on the traditional lifestyles and treaty-rights of Aboriginal peoples, in large part because these issues have serious political and socio-economic implications for non-Aboriginal Canadians. Inasmuch as it may enter the consciousness of most Canadians, the assumption is that Aboriginal peoples, apart from having their populations concentrated on reserves – and acknowledging an income gap – share the same basic characteristics as other Canadians. This perception is incorrect. The marginalization of urban Aboriginal peoples in general, and Aboriginal youth in particular, discussed in this report, reinforces their incomplete and almost ***invisible profile*** in the Canadian portrait. We are encouraged, however, by the increasing prominence given to urban Aboriginal youth issues, particularly in the western provinces, where the population is statistically significant.

> ***The marginalization of urban Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal youth reinforces their incomplete and almost invisible profile in the Canadian portrait.***

This section is intended to bridge the gap between demographic assumptions and demographic realities. This gap is significant for urban Aboriginal youth because, as the Committee recognizes elsewhere in this report, federal programs are intimately linked to on-reserve status. It is also significant because policy makers need to be aware of the much higher proportion of Aboriginal youth within Aboriginal communities than exists in the general Canadian population. Put simply, there are many more urban Aboriginal peoples than most Canadians, and many policymakers, realize; and the majority of them are children or young adults.

THE GENERAL PICTURE

In the 2001 Census of Canada, almost one million people – 976,305 – identified themselves as Aboriginal.(10) This identification represents a 22% jump from the 1996 Census figures. It is 3.3% of Canada's total population, well ahead of the United States (1.5%) or Australia (2.2%). About 62% of Canada's Aboriginal peoples are North American Indian, 30% Métis, 5% Inuit, the remaining 3% identifying with more than one group or as band members not identifying as Aboriginal.

(10) *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A Demographic Profile*. Statistics Canada, January 2003. p. 6. All statistics are based on the 2001 Census unless otherwise stated. Statistics Canada also noted that due to a higher incomplete enumeration rate there is a probable, significant undercoverage of the Aboriginal population in comparison to the general population, as well as causing the discrepancies between enumeration and the Census count of persons registered under the Indian Act and the numbers produced by the Indian register maintained by DIAND.

ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS: 2001 CENSUS*

Aboriginal Group	Population	% of Total Aboriginal Populations
North American Indian	608,850	62%
Métis	292,310	30%
Inuit	45,070	5%
Other+	30,075	2%
Total	**976,305**	

* Numbers reflect those who identified themselves as Aboriginal peoples on 2001 Census questionnaire.

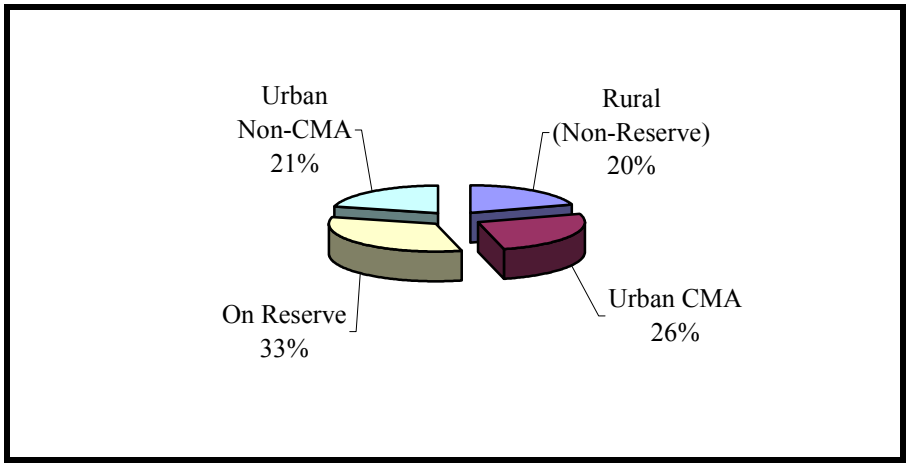
\+ Those who gave multiple identities in answer.

WHERE DO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES LIVE?

Provincially, Ontario, with the largest total provincial populations, has the highest absolute number of Aboriginal peoples, but the highest concentrations of Aboriginal peoples live in the north and in the prairie provinces: Nunavut – 85% of the population; Northwest Territories – 51%; Yukon – 23%; Manitoba – 14%; Saskatchewan – 14%; Alberta – 5%. This northern and western concentration does fit the generally understood picture of Aboriginal demographics.

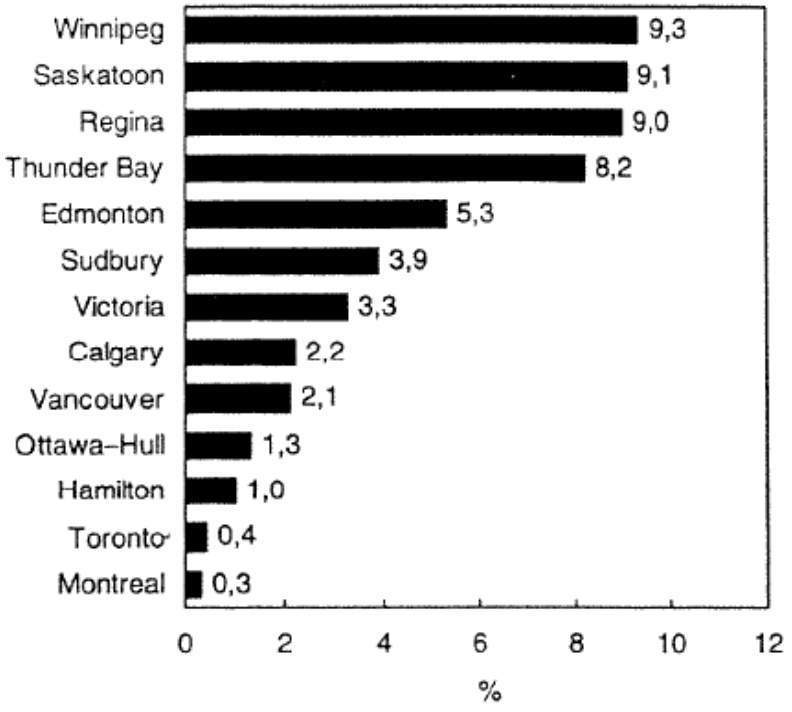
But the real story lies in other numbers. Aboriginal peoples are attracted to the opportunities offered by a predominately urban Canada. One half – 49% – of self-identified Aboriginal peoples lived in urban centres, slightly more than the 47% who lived on a reserve. One quarter of Aboriginal peoples live in just ten Canadian cities (in order): Winnipeg; Edmonton; Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto; Saskatoon; Regina; Ottawa-Gatineau; Montreal and Victoria.

Geographic Distribution of the Aboriginal Identity Population by Place Residence, Canada, 1996



The 56,000 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg are 8% of the city's total population. Saskatoon's 20,000 is 9% of that cities population. By comparison, Toronto's and Montreal's Aboriginal populations of 20,000 and 11,000 respectively, disappear in these cities' much larger urban backdrop: they comprise 0.4% of Toronto's population and 0.3% of Montreal's.

Aboriginal people as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 19 in selected census metropolitan areas, 1996



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada.

But these should not be considered statistics counts. Aboriginal peoples are more mobile than the general Canadian population. One in five aboriginal people moved in the 12 months before the Census was taken, compared to one in seven for the general Canadian population. Almost 100,000 Aboriginal people, 10% of the entire Aboriginal population moved to or from an urban centre in the year previous to the 2001 Census. This high mobility heightens the already significant barriers to program and service delivery presented by this report: challenges in reaching, maintaining contact, and delivering, consistent health care, housing, social services, training and education.

Nor should the dynamics of urban demographics be treated as a single agglomeration. In Winnipeg for example, the Institute of Urban Studies estimates that the urban Aboriginal population is growing by 2000 people a year.[(11)]

(11) "Landmark Study Highlights Issues Facing Aboriginals Who Move To Winnipeg," *Canadian Press*, 1 May 2003 (Newswire).

But net migration statistics hide a greater and more relevant story. Two out of every three Aboriginal migrants move between off reserve locations. Urban-to-urban migrants are almost five times more numerous than migrants leaving reserves. It is this combination of movement to and from, *and within*, urban areas that leads to a highly mobile segment of the Aboriginal population and a high residential mobility rate referred to as the "churn."[12]

The urban Aboriginal population, therefore, is in a high state of flux, much higher than those for non-Aboriginal urban peoples, for Aboriginal peoples on reserve or for rural Aboriginal peoples. This can hide from policymakers what is really going on. The mobility of urban Aboriginal peoples appears to perpetuate an impression that there is mass exodus from reserves for registered Indians. In fact, what is happening is high residential mobility within urban areas forms a significant part of the overall migration statistics.

Furthermore, there are significant differences within the "churn." Demographic and socio-economic characteristics tend to differ among non-movers, residential movers and migrants, with consequent different needs and services for each of these groups. For example, Aboriginal migrants, who represent about 20% of the urban Aboriginal population of Canada's larger cities (the majority comprising flows from city to city), tend to be younger, have younger families and fewer children, with lone parents more common.

Another issue to consider is geographic variation that may create different population sub-groups in different cities. For example, registered Indians who move from more remote reserves to the large urban areas may face greater challenges: there may be a significant gap between their cultural and educational experience and urban realities. By comparison, those moving from reserves closer to, or even within, large urban areas may have less difficulty adapting to urban life.

Implications of this kind of Aboriginal mobility are: cultural isolation, family instability and dissolution; a high proportion of female lone-parent families; economic marginalization and low incomes; high victimization and crime rates. Churn also creates much greater difficulties in the provision of vital programs and services for urban Aboriginal people.

As well as social isolation, it must be recognized that cultural isolation and economic marginalization reinforces increased mobility, raising the bar not only for the provision of services, but for the absolute need for these services to break the cycle. This suggests that in part, Aboriginal peoples are moving because their needs are not addressed and that vital programs and services are not present or are not being effectively delivered.

But, apart from the broad outline presented above, there is as yet very little hard evidence beyond the anecdotal on this churn effect. Witnesses from Statistics Canada informed the Committee that they have as yet no way to discern whether an urban Aboriginal person was a first-time urban resident, a second-generation or greater urban resident, or what the full mobility patterns or history of the person might be. Much more work needs to be done in order to effectively uncover how best to serve this community.

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(12) This discussion and statistics on the churn effect and on mobility rates is taken from Mary Jane Norris, *Aboriginal Mobility and Migration within Urban Canada: Outcomes, Factors and Implications*. Research Analysis Directorate, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Presented to the Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, 26-28 November 2002. Data is based on the 1996 Census and reflects migration patterns for 1991-1996.

WHO ARE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES?

Nor is the Aboriginal population static or linear in the dynamics of growth. The Aboriginal population of Canada is growing faster, and is much younger, than the general Canadian population. With a median age of 23.5, half the Aboriginal population are young adults, youth or children. The median age in Manitoba is 20.4 years; in Saskatchewan, the median Aboriginal person is a teenager of 18-and-a-half years of age. The median Canadian is half a generation older; and at almost 38 years of age, approaching middle age. In Saskatchewan, the discrepancy is the greatest, the non-Aboriginal population is aging, and at 38.8 years of age, over 20 years older than the median age of a Saskatchewan Aboriginal person.

In popular culture terms, the median Aboriginal person is Generation-X or Generation Next, the median Canadian is a baby-boomer. This could imply another, and altogether different, cultural barrier layered into the existing cultural divides that exist for those who need to access programs and services.

More than a third of Aboriginal youth were under 14 as of 2001. Another 17% were teenagers or young adults. Within a very few years, they will be in the labour market. Of these young people, urban Aboriginal youth are more likely to live in lone parent families than their on-reserve counterparts. Approximately one third of on-reserve children live in lone parent families as opposed to half of urban Aboriginal youth, with the percentages in the large Prairie centres reaching as high as 50%. Only 17% of non-Aboriginal children live in lone-parent families.

And of the Aboriginal peoples, the Métis are the most likely to be urban residents and move frequently. Almost 70% of all Métis live in Canada's urban areas: one third of all Métis live in just five cities: Winnipeg; Edmonton; Vancouver; Calgary; Saskatoon. For young Métis, if they live in a city, their chances of living in a lone-parent family are double that of their rural counterparts. Their chances of remaining in one place are much less than other Aboriginal peoples: one-fifth of all Métis moved in the year previous of the 2001 Census.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Aboriginal peoples, like all Canadians, move to urban areas because that is where lies the greatest concentrations of wealth, of economic, social and cultural activity, and ultimately, opportunity. Yet these significantly younger, significantly more mobile urban Aboriginal peoples face great challenges in living in Canada's cities. Their reality differs from mainstream Canada's.

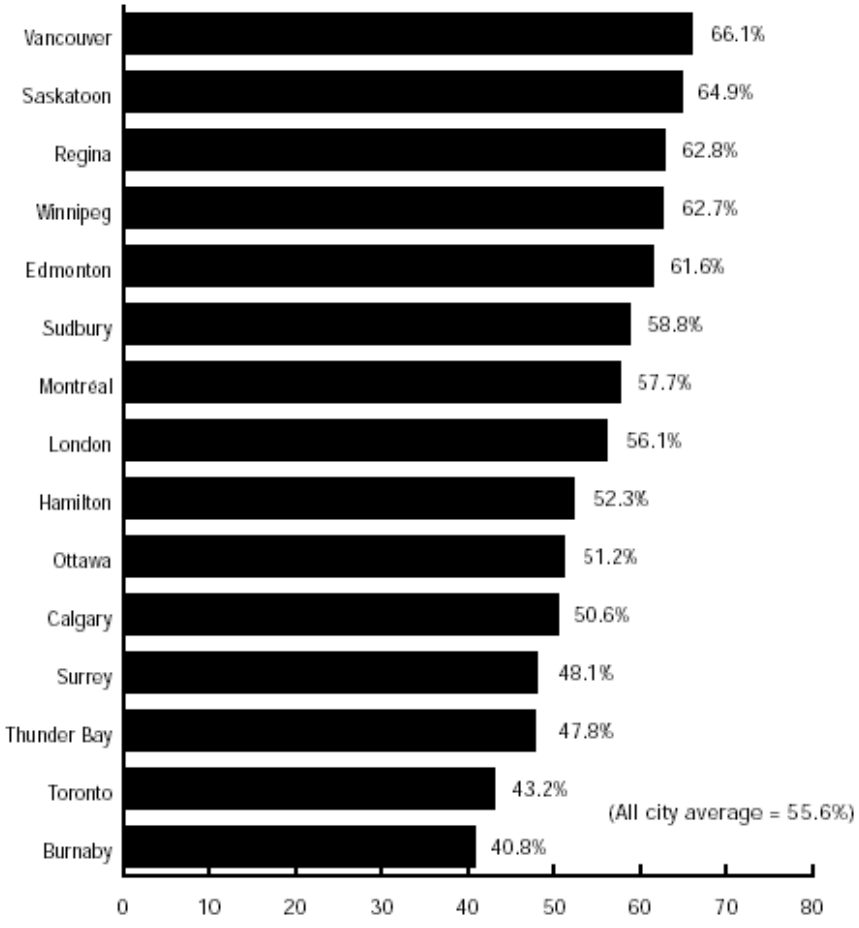
According to testimony from Statistics Canada,[13] unemployment is much greater for the Aboriginal population that the non-Aboriginal population. Levels of unemployment are much greater for the statistically salient component of Aboriginal youth than for non-Aboriginal youth: there are proportionally far more Aboriginal youth and they have fewer jobs. In the big cities, 68% of non-Aboriginal youth have jobs, compared to 45% for Aboriginal youth. 55% of urban Aboriginal youth in Canada's largest cities, and 42% of Aboriginal youth in Canada's other towns and cities, live below the low-income cut-off.

(13) All statistics in the section, unless otherwise cited, are from Statistics Canada testimony to the Committee, 4 December 2001. Socio-economic data presented the Committee was from the 1996 Census: detailed analysis of the 2001 Census data in this area had yet to be released.

A recent study conducted by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) on urban poverty in Canada found that in 1995, Aboriginal people living in cities were more than twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Aboriginal people. According to the study, whose tabulations were based on statistics from the 1996 census, an average 55.6% of Aboriginal people in cities were living in poverty, compared to 24% of non-Aboriginal people.[14] Stated another way, while Aboriginal persons accounted for an average of 1.5 per cent of the total population, they represented 3.4 per cent of the poor population in all cities in 1995. Other than non-permanent residents, the Aboriginal population had the highest incidence of poverty.

The CCSD study also indicates marked regional disparities in the poverty rate among the urban Aboriginal population, with the incidence of poverty being greatest in western urban centres. Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina posted significantly high rates of Aboriginal poverty. In Regina, Aboriginal people accounted for 24.3 per cent of the poor population, more than three times their proportion of the total population. In Winnipeg and Saskatoon, Aboriginal people represented 17.6 and 22.5 per cent of the poor in those cities, respectively.

POVERTY RATES FOR ABORIGINAL IDENTITY POPULATION, BY CITY, 1995



Note: Aboriginal identity refers to persons who identified with being North American Indian, Métis or Inuit. Cities with a poor Aboriginal population of less than 1,000 persons were not included in this list.

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's 1996 Census, custom tabulations.

(14) Canadian Council on Social Development, *Urban Poverty in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, 2000, p. 38.

Typically, then, cities with a sizeable portion of Aboriginal people were those with the highest incidence of Aboriginal poverty. Moreover, in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Regina and Saskatoon, census tract data revealed that the Aboriginal population was much more concentrated in a few areas, predominantly inner-city neighbourhoods, than in Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau or Montreal. It has been suggested that the residential clustering of Aboriginal people in core areas of these cities can lead to relatively high and negative "concentration effects."

However, it should be recognized that not every urban Aboriginal youth faces the worst: there are areas of hope. Urban Aboriginals have a higher level of education than those on-reserve. Some urban centres – notably Thunder Bay, Montreal, Victoria, Toronto and Regina – manage to retain Aboriginal youth in school at rates nearing 80%, which is close to the 83% average attained by non-Aboriginal youth. But as for other socio-demographic factors, it is the large prairie cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg which, statistically, seem to present the greatest challenge to young Aboriginal people.

Comprehensive health statistics concerning the urban Aboriginal youth population are not readily available. However, it is known that Aboriginal youth have higher incidences of preventable diseases and disabilities, mortality rates, and suicide rates than that of other Canadian youth. In August 2002, Statistics Canada released its first-ever study looking into the health of the off-reserve Aboriginal population. Not surprisingly, the author of the report, Mr. Michael Tjepkema, found that Aboriginal peoples residing in cities and towns are generally in poorer health than the non-Aboriginal population. The study found that inequalities in health persisted between Aboriginal people who lived off-reserve and other Canadians after socio-economic and health behaviour factors were taken into account. This suggests that both socio-economic and health behaviour factors did not fully explain the disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in reporting fair or poor health.

Some key findings include:

- the off-reserve Aboriginal population was 1.5 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to experience a major depressive episode;

- when a broad range of socio-economic factors such as education, work status and household income were taken into account, the off-reserve Aboriginal population was still 1.5 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to report fair or poor health;

- the off-reserve Aboriginal population was 1.5 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to report at least one chronic condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure or arthritis; and

- the off-reserve Aboriginal population was 1.4 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to report a long-term activity restriction than the non-Aboriginal population. This difference was eliminated, however, once health behaviour factors were also taken into account.

CONCLUSION

The data indicates that the past policy neglect of urban Aboriginal issues is no longer tenable. In general, Aboriginal people fare considerably worse on nearly every social and economic indicator. These demographic indicators suggest that the well-being of Aboriginal people in cities has a direct impact on the well-being of the cities themselves, most especially in western Canada, where a substantial number of Aboriginal people reside. The Committee recognizes that the statistics presented to it are aggregates of a diversity of individual and local community circumstances. On the whole, however, urban Aboriginal people continue to occupy severely disadvantaged positions in Canadian society. This collective marginalization, if left unaddressed, can result in emerging inner-city ghettos and risk undermining community solidarity. This "dark underside" of city life for many Aboriginal people, as one commentator notes, represents "not only a tragedy for those who live it, but threatens the social fabric and the civility of the cities where Aboriginal populations are relatively or absolutely large."(15)

Governments need to adjust programming to meet urban realities. Program adjustment requires two elements: a fuller statistical description of the social landscape, which in turn must be predicated on a clarification of the murky jurisdictional waters in which programming is currently made.

There is, accordingly, a need for governments to adjust programming to meet urban realities. But program adjustment requires two elements: a fuller statistical description of the social landscape, which in turn must be predicated on a clarification of the murky jurisdictional waters in which programming is currently made.

(15) Cairns, p. 32. Two Roads to the Future. Policy options.

PART III: THE CONTEMPORARY JURISDICTIONAL FRAMEWORK

THE CURRENT AMBIGUITY

One of the most significant factors contributing to both the challenging circumstances facing many urban Aboriginal people, and the sub-optimal policy and programming environment, is disagreement between the federal and provincial governments over the question of responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy.

Calvin Hanselmann,
Senior Policy Analyst, Canada West Foundation

Aboriginal people who reside off reserve and in urban areas, irrespective of status, can be said to be the poor man of the Canadian constitution. The answer to the question of who is constitutionally responsible for handling Aboriginal issues depends on where Aboriginal peoples live, or what their status might be. It is the basis of an ongoing debate between federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments. This current jurisdictional ambiguity has serious implications concerning federal responsibility for: (i) First Nations people residing off reserve as well as Inuit not living in traditional territories, and; (ii) Métis and non-Status Indians.

Canada's policies fall short of meeting its constitutional obligations, and this is demonstrated by the narrow policy or legislative focus that now exists for First Nations citizens. It is obvious that there is a need for fundamental institutional change overall.

Grand Chief Dennis White Bird,
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Federal responsibility for members of First Nations communities residing off reserve is unclear. To date, federal programs have been institutionalized and structured to deliver services through reserves. In 1983, the Report of the House of Commons Special Committee on Indian Self-Government (Penner Report) noted, with great concern, that despite the fact that the federal government has jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" by virtue of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, "federal laws and policies have consistently been designed to deny this constitutional responsibility insofar as Indians living off-reserve are concerned."(16) The Special Committee concluded that "Indians" living off reserve should have rights to special federal programs and that the "continuing responsibilities" of the federal government in this respect must be recognized. The Committee wishes to underline the fact that these status distinctions have been imposed upon Aboriginal peoples by Canadian

(16) House of Commons, *Special Committee on Indian Self Government*, 1983, p. 67.

governments. They are status or non-status, treaty Indians, Bill C-31[17] registrants, residing either on or off reserve, and the list goes on.

Twenty years after the release of the Penner Report, issues of jurisdiction and status remain largely unresolved:

> Unfortunately, Canada's policies fall short of meeting its constitutional obligations, and this is demonstrated by the narrow policy or legislative focus that now exists for First Nations citizens. ***It is obvious that there is a need for fundamental institutional change overall.***[18] [Emphasis added]

Federal responsibility for Métis and non-Status Indians remains, too, a matter of ongoing controversy. Although section 35 of *Constitution Act, 1982*, defines Aboriginal peoples as the "Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada," the federal government's current policy is that it's responsibility, with a few exceptions, extends only to Indian people resident on reserve, while provincial governments have a general responsibility for Aboriginal people living off-reserve.[19] Aboriginal peoples argue that the federal government has a responsibility to all Aboriginal people, not only status Indians and the Inuit. To date, however, neither the federal nor the provincial governments have accepted any special responsibility for the Métis and non-status Indian population.[20]

Aboriginal people living away from reserves, including status Indians, non-status Indians and the Métis are the clear majority of the Aboriginal population. They are, however, those least served by federal programming. Such an outstanding, foundational, issue contributes, in no small way, to the poor economic and social conditions experienced by so many Aboriginal people in this country. In the words of one witness:

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(17) In 1985, Bill C-31 amended the *Indian Act* to comply with equality guarantees of the Charter by eliminating long-standing gender discrimination in registration provisions and restoring entitlement to *Indian status* under the amended Indian Act. There are, however, several outstanding concerns relating to Bill C-31. Notably, it was anticipated that the Bill would remove the category of "non-Status Indians" so that all First Nations members would be recognized as Indians under the *Indian Act*. The implication was that many off-reserve First Nations people would acquire Indian status and be accorded the rights and benefits enjoyed by Status Indians. For many this has not happened. It is beyond the scope of this report to conduct a detailed examination of Bill C-31provisions. However, we emphasize that outstanding C-31 issues continue to affect many off-reserve Aboriginal women and their children, and that these issues must be dealt with by the federal government on an urgent basis.

(18) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Grand Chief Dennis White Bird.

(19) A 1939 Supreme Court decision (*Re Eskimos*) brought the Inuit within the meaning of "Indians" under subsection 91(24); recognizing a special federal role in relation to the Inuit. As with on-reserve registered Indians, the federal government provides a number of programs and services to Inuit communities.

(20) The status of the Métis and the non-registered Indian population under subsection 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* remains undetermined. As mentioned, the federal government maintains that it does not have exclusive responsibility for these groups, and that its financial responsibilities for these groups are thereby limited.

> When I talk about dealing with Aboriginal youth, whether they are on-reserve or off-reserve in urban communities, we need to address the broader issues. I return to the federal government meeting its fiduciary obligations to Aboriginal people regardless of where we live. We talk about jurisdiction. There is a big gap [in services] when Aboriginal people leave their communities.(21)

The Committee, having listened to Aboriginal groups and individuals who have appeared before us, believes that the federal role with respect to Aboriginal people living off reserve and in urban areas deserves further examination and subsequent resolution. A review of federal policy on this issue is past due, even were we to disregard the fact that 7 out of 10 Aboriginal people now live off reserve. Changing settlement patterns, coupled with impoverished social conditions, require policy-makers to meaningfully address the current "geographies of policies, rights and administration."(22)

FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The failure of federal and provincial governments to accept, clarify and coordinate their jurisdictional roles and responsibilities has resulted in what the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* called a "policy vacuum," with the needs of urban and off-reserve Aboriginal people as the first casualty in this jurisdictional "no man's land."

The federal government exercises its responsibility for First Nations people through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The Department has primary, though not exclusive, responsibility for meeting the federal government's constitutional, legal, treaty and political responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Northerners. It does not, however, acknowledge a legal or constitutional responsibility for non-Status, Métis, or First Nations people residing off-reserve. The result is that these groups do not benefit from the $6 billion annual budget of DIAND, which includes health, education, housing, economic development, cultural and social programming:

> The federal government has restricted its provision of services to Indians living on reserves and to Inuit and Indians living in northern communities. With the exception of some education and health benefits, federal services are not available once Indian people leave the reserve or Inuit and Indians leave their northern communities. Métis and all others who are not Indians as defined by the *Indian Act* receive few services under federal legislation.(23)

As a result of this restriction, Aboriginal people living off reserve must look to provincial and municipal governments for the provision of public services. The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* found, however, that provincial administration had its limitations. While Aboriginal people living in urban environments could, in theory, access provincial programs of

(21) *Proceedings*, 1 April 2003, Anne Lesage, Executive Director, Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre.

(22) Evelyn Peters, *Developing Federal Policy for First Nations People in Urban Areas: 1945-1975*, The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XXI, 1(2001): 57-96.

(23) Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres*, Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, 1993, p. 5.

general application, many faced serious challenges accessing those services and would have preferred culturally appropriate programming.

Traditionally, most provinces have maintained that, in general, the federal government has primary jurisdiction over, and, more importantly, financial responsibility for, all of Canada's Aboriginal peoples – including off-reserve registered and non-registered Indians and Métis.

EMERGING TRENDS

Some provincial governments have recently taken an increasingly active role to improve their relations with Aboriginal communities. Saskatchewan is a case in point. Its *Metis and off-Reserve First Nations Strategy* is a strategic and comprehensive approach in addressing the needs of the urban Aboriginal population, and by extension, the social and economic well-being of the broader community:

> Our future in Saskatchewan depends on our ability to ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people no longer live in cultures that are isolated from one another … It is fundamentally important for the social health of our communities, and beyond, in Saskatchewan that we find healthy ways for that integration, that intersection of two cultures, two societies, and in many cases two races, to be positive and constructive rather than negative and dysfunctional.[24]

The evidence of a shift in provincial thinking goes beyond the Saskatchewan example. To varying degrees, it can be seen in the emergence of provincial policy frameworks and introduction of Aboriginal-specific programming in several provinces across the country.[25] For instance, in 1999 the Alberta government released its Aboriginal policy framework: – *Strengthening Relationships* – and in its 2001 Speech from the Throne, the provincial government of British Columbia committed itself to redoubling its efforts to address urban Aboriginal issues.

Despite its historic reluctance to provide programs and services for urban and off reserve Aboriginal residents, the federal government has also begun to acknowledge the necessity of increasing its activity in this area. There are approximately 80 federally targeted programs for off-reserve and urban Aboriginal residents in a range of policy fields, including health, homelessness, training, employment, education, justice, childcare, youth and cultural support.[26] A list of federal programs for urban Aboriginal people is appended to this report. Other notable steps taken by the federal government include:

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(24) *Proceedings*, 25 February 2003, Brent Cotter, Q.C., Deputy Minister, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Saskatchewan.

(25) In its January 2002 report entitled *Enhanced Urban Aboriginal Programming in Western Canada*, the Canada West Foundation found that a number of provincial governments have implemented a range of enhanced programs for urban Aboriginal people in their major cities. The report is available on-line at www.cwf.ca.

(26) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceeding*, First Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 27 November 2001, Fred Caron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Privy Council Office.

- in the Government of Canada's *2002 Speech from the Throne* the needs of Aboriginal people residing in cities were recognized for the first time;[27]

- the April 2002 interim report of *Prime Minister's Task Force on Urban Issues* made several important recommendations aimed at alleviating some of the pressures shouldered by urban Aboriginal People;[28] and

- in response to the socio-economic needs of the urban Aboriginal population, in 1998, the federal government launched its *Urban Aboriginal Strategy* (UAS). Relying on *existing* programs and services, the UAS seeks to enhance coordination, improve horizontal linkages and policy integration within the federal government and partner with other stakeholders to better address the needs of urban Aboriginal people.

Notwithstanding their respective jurisdictional positions, federal and provincial governments are clearly involved in urban Aboriginal program and policy development. Efforts, however, are ad hoc and disjointed, with resources inefficiently used and programs duplicated. As discussed later in the report, much of this program activity is developed in isolation from one another. The result is an uncoordinated, labyrinthine programming landscape.

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THE PORTABILITY OF RIGHTS

The courts are increasingly challenging the current federal policy framework, which specifically attaches rights to residency on reserve. Notably, in its 1999 *Corbiere* decision,[29] the Supreme Court of Canada extended the right of band members living off reserve to vote in band elections, in those instances where elections are held under the provisions of the *Indian Act*. The Supreme Court ruled that you could not discriminate against band members based on where they live and found that discrimination based on residency violated section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Corbiere may well have profound implications for the broader rights of non-resident members. A logical extension of the rationale provided for in *Corbiere* could be that it is discriminatory to deny access to programs and services to non-resident members, as it is discriminatory to deny them voting rights. The Assembly of First Nation's own analysis of the

(27) In its 2002 Speech from The Throne the government committed itself to working with "interested provinces to expand on existing pilot programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities."

(28) The full interim report is available on the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues Web site: www.liberal.parl.gc.ca.

(29) *Corbiere* v. *Canada*, [1994] 1 C.N.L.R. 71 (F.C.T.D.).

1999 *Corbiere* decision points to its potential impact on the availability of programs and services for members living off-reserve:

> *Corbiere* has raised the issue of whether or not non-resident members have the right to programs and services. Under *Corbiere*, the right to vote might also mean the right to programs and services.(30)

The office of the Federal Interlocutor for the Métis and Non-Status Indians commented:

> One is the *Corbiere* case, in which the right of off-reserve people to vote in band elections was upheld. That, in my own view, is going to change the face of Indian politics significantly.(31)

The current disparity in the range of available programs and services to off reserve residents is a source of great frustration and represents a longstanding grievance. In his appearance before the Committee, then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Matthew Coon-Come, told the Committee that "members who have chosen to live in those [urban] areas should be provided, without penalty, the same services and programs that they would have elsewhere."(32) Other witnesses also emphasized that the issue of mobility rights is a matter of priority that must be dealt with by the federal government:

> If they live off-reserve, then perhaps they do not have the same level of access as the person who lives on reserve next door to the Chief. A reserve is like a little village, where everybody knows everybody and everybody is related … There are hardships for the people who move away. The portability of rights is a real problem.(33)

> Unfortunately, First Nations under the Indian Act do not receive funding for programs and services for off-reserve members, although we are politically accountable to off-reserve members. Decisions made by the Supreme Court of Canada, *Corbiere*, *Delgamuukw* and *Musqueam* helped to clarify and reaffirm responsibilities a band has to their off-reserve membership. These decisions also support the position that First Nations have about the portability of treaty and inherent rights of their people and that of First Nation governments.(34)

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(30) Assembly of First Nations, *The Corbiere Decision: What it means for First Nations*, p. 16.

(31) *Proceedings*, 27 November 2001, Mr. Fred Caron.

(32) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, First Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 11 June 2002, Matthew Coon Come, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations.

(33) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, First Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 6 March 2002, Barbara Caverhill, Acting Director, Employment and Human Development, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

(34) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Grand Chief White Bird.

Corbiere, and other recent court cases[35] are beginning to lend strong support to the argument made by First Nation governments for some time that Aboriginal and Treaty rights are not confined to the boundaries of the reserve. In other words, rights are portable and the authority of First Nation governments extends beyond reserve boundaries. Witnesses, however, informed the Committee that federal policy is presently designed in such a way that when a First Nation member leaves the reserve boundary, their identity and rights must also be left behind.

In their appearance before this Committee, officials from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development informed us that the Department was planning a fundamental policy review of its policy in this regard. We were told:

> We have started a fundamental policy reform, so fundamental that in fact I have had to assign a whole team exclusively to that. One of the issues that the team is addressing is that of eligibility. Right now … it is based on residency. We are, however, wondering whether that really is a good idea. Does that truly reflect the true identity of the person? The person is just as Aboriginal on the reserve as off. Perhaps we should attach eligibility to the person rather than residency, and that is one of the policy options for reform that we are considering.[36]

The increasing urbanization of Aboriginal people is amplifying these pressures towards the need for a new direction in policy development.[37] Current Aboriginal demography and the emerging jurisprudence in the area of off-reserve rights, suggest that the Department's mandate no longer fully corresponds to the geographic identities of Aboriginal peoples. It is clear to us that the Department's current mandate, in which its primary responsibility is to First Nations living on reserve and the Inuit, can no longer truly provide an adequate legislative basis upon which to address the needs of the vast majority of Aboriginal people; two-thirds of whom

Witnesses informed the Committee that federal policy is presently designed in such a way that when a First Nation member leaves the reserve boundary, their identity and rights must also be left behind.

(35) In the Federal Court of Canada's 2002 decision, *Misquadis* v. *Canada*, the applicants, off reserve Aboriginal labour market organizations, wanted Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to ensure its benefits are provided to all Aboriginal people equally. The central issue was whether the HRDC violated section 15 of the Charter by not focusing its Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA's) on reserve-based communities. Justice Lemieux found that the manner in which HRDC applied its AHRDA agreements was, in fact, discriminatory, and directed the Department to undo its exclusion.

(36) *Proceedings*, 6 March 2002, Chantal Bernier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

(37) The profound demographic shift in the population and geographies of Aboriginal people has a profound implication for the federal role toward First Nations members. It has meant that over time the federal government has seen it responsibility extend to less and less people.

today live off reserve. Consider, for instance, that ***of the nearly $8 billion dollars the government will spend in the 2002-2003 fiscal year, only $270 million flows to urban and off-reserve programming***. The Committee is therefore of the opinion that the portability of rights of First Nations must be dealt with as a matter of priority.

Accordingly, we recommend that:

Recommended Action

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in collaboration with First Nations:

- **Develop procedures and guidelines recognizing the portability of rights of First Nations people.**

- **Guidelines and procedures must include estimates for the necessary financial resources required to provide equitable access to programs and services to resident and non-resident members.**

The Committee expects that all actions taken by the Department with regard to this recommendation will be in full partnership with First Nations.

The recognition and implementation of mobility rights will have numerous implications for First Nation communities, not least of which is their financial capacity to provide services to non-resident members. These are concomitant questions that require careful consideration: how should rights be balanced so that the interests of resident and non-resident members are respected? What is the role and responsibilities of First Nation governments for their citizens, on and off reserve? What is the federal government's role and responsibility to off reserve members? Furthermore, the portability of rights issue touches upon the very foundations of citizenship for First Nation governments. Accordingly, First Nations must be given sufficient time to develop their own policies and procedures with regard to the rights and interests of all its members as well as a strong voice in designing policies that so materially affect their governments and citizens.

Further, this Committee feels strongly that the federal government must take formal steps to clarify and resolve the rights of the Métis people of Canada. Although constitutionally recognized as one of three Aboriginal groups in Canada, the Métis do not enjoy the same rights as First Nations people and the Inuit. The scope of Métis rights to hunt and fish as well as the broader legal implications of their inclusion in the constitution requires resolution. Moreover, the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in the case of *R. v. Powley*[38] will have important implications for policy-makers and force outstanding Métis issues more vigorously onto the public policy agenda.

(38) *R.* v. *Powley*, 2003 SCC 43.

Accordingly, this Committee further recommends that:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government must enter into formal negotiations with the appropriate Métis organizations to clarify and resolve outstanding jurisdictional and rights issues of the Métis people of Canada.**

GETTING BEYOND JURISDICTION: THE ISSUE OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

We will speak to the core issues that affect youth: education, education, education
…

Mr. Robert Adams,
Executive Director, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

Post-secondary education support for Aboriginal students is another challenge facing urban Aboriginal people, largely as the result of jurisdictional disagreements. This is an area in which Aboriginal youth fall through the jurisdictional cracks of program delivery. While governments argue over their respective responsibilities, another generation of youth is denied access to those opportunities essential to creating a better life. These jurisdictional problems only aggravate the burdens of the misdirected policies of the past.

> ***Urban Aboriginal people, for the most part, have been left behind in terms of benefiting from Canada's economic prosperity, and sadly, they have been neglected too often by governments that argue on the semantics of responsibility.***
>
> **Privy Council Office, *Urban Aboriginal Strategy: An Analysis***

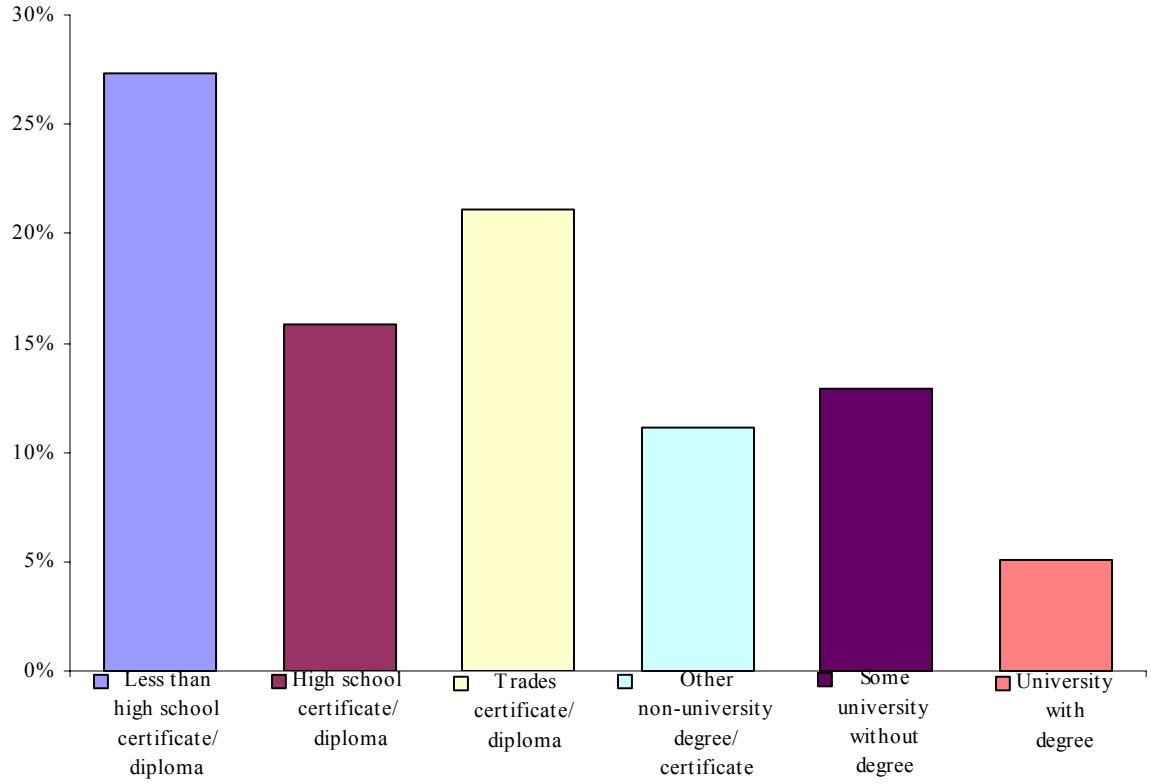
Supporting the education of all Aboriginal youth is necessary to create long-lasting solutions for this disadvantaged segment of the population. In a technological, globalized world which prizes knowledge workers, we can ill-afford to make primary, secondary, or higher education a casualty of narrow policy thinking. It is a matter of entitlement and basic common sense not to fail this generation of Aboriginal youth. Yet, in higher education, this is what we are doing.

RECASTING THE CURRENT APPROACH TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

A post-secondary education is essential to improving the economic and social outcomes of Aboriginal youth and reducing the disparity that continues to exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. According to data compiled by Statistics Canada and presented before the Committee, the gap in employment levels between Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal youth narrows significantly if we focus on youth with a university degree.[39] For instance, in 1996, Aboriginal youth without a high school leaving certificate reported an unemployment rate of 40%. In contrast, unemployment rates were only half as high for those with secondary (23%) or college (20%) completion. Young Aboriginal people with a university degree recorded the lowest rate, at 9%.[40] Thus, an increasingly important mitigating factor offsetting poor employment outcomes for Aboriginal youth is education. The 2001 census data confirms this reality.

Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainement, Aboriginal Population, Canada, 2001 Census



Source: The Canada West Foundation, 2003.

The positive correlation between education and employment is not a surprisingly new idea. What is novel, however, is how pronounced this link is for Aboriginal youth. Young Aboriginal people with higher educational levels can expect to *markedly* increase their likelihood of employment and to raise their expected income level. Professor Eric Howe, University of

(39) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, First Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 4 December 2001, Doug Norris, Director General, Census and Demographic Statistics, Statistics Canada.

(40) Heather Tait, *Educational Achievements of Young Aboriginal Adults*, Canadian Social Trends, Spring 1999, p. 8. Statistics Canada – Catalogue No. 11-008.

Saskatchewan, whose research concluded that Aboriginal people have the highest average dollar rate of return on their investment in education, underscored this point. Moreover, Professor Howe's research shows that at the very top educational levels, Aboriginal people earn approximately equal amounts as their non-Aboriginal counter-parts.

Higher education is also critical to ensuring meaningful employment in an increasingly competitive knowledge-based economy. The days when a high school education was sufficient for obtaining gainful, long-term employment are behind us. The labour market has changed dramatically in the last decade due, in large measure, to technological changes and the processes of globalization. Post-industrial economies place a high premium on knowledge and skills, and never before has the link between education and employment become so vital. Studies, such as the Alberta National Round Table on Learning, suggest that by 2004, one in four jobs will require a university degree. In his testimony, Mr. John Kim Bell observed:

> We are witnessing the dying days in which secondary education is the bare minimum for employment. New jobs that will be created in the future will require diplomas or degrees that come with new skills and as a result, improved education is not only essential to finding a job, it will be necessary to keeping one."(41)

Despite some assuring gains, however, Aboriginal youth continue to lag behind the rest of the Canadian population, at a time when jobs require more and more education.

The recent 2001 census figures indicate that the education gap is narrowing, but it is still wide among university graduates. While the proportion of Aboriginal people without a high school diploma decreased from 45% in 1996 to 39% in 2001, the proportion of Aboriginal people with post-secondary training continues to lag behind the rest of the country. Compared to 38% of Aboriginal youth with post-secondary education (up from 33% in 1996), 53.4% of non-Aboriginal people had post-secondary credentials. When we unravel these percentages we begin to appreciate their full impact. In Saskatchewan, for example, 460 Aboriginal youth who were out of school held a university degree in 2001, compared to 9,445 non-Aboriginal youth.(42)

This younger age structure represents a future opportunity for cities, especially in western cities. As the non-Aboriginal population enters retirement, forecasts suggest skilled labour shortages. The younger urban Aboriginal population could help alleviate these shortages as it comes of labour force age. Such an opportunity, however, will be lost if young Aboriginal people in Canada's cities are unable to fully participate in the labour force.

Calvin Hanselmann,
Canada West Foundation

(41) National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, *Taking Pulse*, publication submitted to the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, p. 8.

(42) Globe and Mail, Alanna Mitchell, *The New Canada: Changing Native History*, 17 June 2003.

The gulf is staggering, and for many urban centres, unsustainable. Cities are vital nodes of the global economy and their continued prosperity is threatened by the anticipated shortfall of skilled workers. The impending labour shortage is a serious concern for business, labour and governments. Aboriginal youth, a growing segment of urban populations, are an important resource to help meet labour needs. Witnesses told us that young Aboriginal people hold out great promise in being able to bridge the impending gap in Canada's shrinking labour force.

For business and community leaders, educated and motivated Aboriginal youth could form a dynamic and key component of tomorrow's labour force. Unless we begin to address the structural barriers, this cannot happen.

REFORM OF THE POST-SECONDARY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

Canada's failure rests, in large part, with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's unique interpretation of its mandate. The Department's Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) does not make residency on reserve a requirement for eligibility. Yet, eligibility is restricted to Status Indians and the Inuit, effectively excluding the Métis and non-Status Indians from benefiting equally from the program. Several witnesses voiced their frustration with this restriction, based, as it were, on arbitrary status distinctions:

> The post-secondary education funding available for Status Indians, although not limited to the reserves, is a fundamental issue for us. We need to take another look at how we can assist more young Aboriginal people with their education.(43)

> Because we are non-Status Indians, we are not eligible for assistance from the Department of Indian Affairs … and have to depend upon provincial programs of general application.(44)

The Committee was told repeatedly that the current federal policy applies a narrow jurisdictional approach that no longer mirrors current demographic and political realities. A broader approach to these issues is necessary if we genuinely wish to move the agenda forward in the area of education.

Higher education, as was recently observed, is the heart and soul of the Aboriginal community's rise from desperation to middle class.(45) And laying down the honest foundations for the development of a vibrant middle class requires governments to think and act proactively.

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(43) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, First Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 16 April 2002, Dwight A. Dorey, National Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

(44) Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Proceedings*, Second Session: Thirty-Seventh Parliament, 2 April 2003, Chief Betty Anne Lavallée, C.D., New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council.

(45) *Ibid.*, Alanna Mitchell.

The issue, as several witnesses pointed out, is that current federal programming tends to be mainly reactive. As one witness observed:

> I believe that envisioning and building the future in the way that we imagine it should be, to be proactive rather than reactive is more beneficial.(46)

Aboriginal youth told us they feel governments see them as problems to be fixed rather than as a resource to be nurtured.

> We have to get proactive with young people. We have to stop looking at youth like they are defects, like they are problems that need to be fixed.(47)

Reform and dedicated support for post-secondary education is vital to creating that kind of deep structural change. Notwithstanding the Department's position with respect to its mandate, the status-based restriction on eligibility for post-secondary education assistance must be reconsidered. The urgent need to lift Aboriginal youth out of their circumstances in a permanent and meaningful way, we believe, makes this policy increasingly difficult to justify.

Higher education is a means by which Aboriginal people can begin to reverse the trend of their historic social and economic exclusion from influential centres of decision-making. Their notable absence in senior levels of industry and government effectively leaves them without a voice in areas of great influence.

> The danger of under-representation of Aboriginal peoples in these quantitative occupations is a great concern to us all as a society. We are missing out on an opportunity to influence decisions that have dramatic social consequences.(48)

The link between education and employment is a critical one, so is the relationship between unemployment and social despair. The lack of access to meaningful employment places these youth at risk for a number of social problems. Facing extreme economic marginality, many may doubt that they are able to achieve approved societal goals, thereby making criminal activity, for some, the primary route to gaining material wealth. Involvement in various illegal enterprises can provide short-term financial and social gain. Youth risk becoming embedded in this lifestyle, making it

The lack of access to meaningful employment in the regular economy places these youth at risk for a number of social problems.

(46) *Proceedings*, 11 February 2003, Mr. John Kim Bell.

(47) *Proceedings*, 18 March 2003, Vancouver Aboriginal Youth Round Table, Ms. Melanie Mark, Urban Native Youth Association.

(48) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Gisele Campbell, Employment Equity Advisor, Manitoba Hydro.

difficult to leave. Poor education, few employment skills, and sparse job experience provide little basis for these youth to pursue legitimate career paths.(49)

If the challenges they face are ignored, it can, and will, have negative consequences for both Aboriginal communities and Canadian society as a whole. There is a pressing need for governments to invest resources in youth initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes, so that Aboriginal youth acquire the training and skills needed to obtain meaningful employment. The *Labour Market Profile* suggests that access to the Canadian labour market is particularly precarious for this segment of the youth population. Aboriginal youth warrant particular attention as they tend to be among the least educated of all youth and that they most likely would benefit from investing further in education.(50)

The federal government has acknowledged the importance of improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. In its efforts to address the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth, the Government of Canada, in its *Speech from the Throne* (2002), signalled that First Nation education was to be a priority:

> The government will take additional measures to address the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children … The most enduring contribution Canada can make to First Nations is to raise the standard of education on-reserve. The government will work with the recently created National Working Group on Education to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children, and take immediate steps to help First Nations children with special learning needs.(51)

The Committee applauds that commitment, but continues to believe that the educational outcomes for *all* Aboriginal children and youth should be a priority for the Government of Canada, and that commitment should not be limited solely to First Nation education, but must also address the educational needs of the Métis and non-Status Indians.

The Committee is well aware that there is no 'silver bullet', no easy solution to the many challenges confronting Aboriginal youth. We are also keenly aware that there are limits to what can be achieved through a strategy that focuses on encouraging post-secondary participation, but fails to consider the broader social and educational environment. However, where structural barriers do exist, policy-makers *must*, in the best interests of Aboriginal youth, act to remove them.

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(49) The situation of Aboriginal youth in Canada illustrates this point. Faced with economic and social marginalization, the rate of criminal activity is much higher than for the non-Aboriginal population. Moreover, the rise in Aboriginal youth gangs, particularly in western cities such as Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver, can also provide a sense of identity and community to what, in essence, is a disenfranchised part of Canadian society.

(50) Human Resources Development Canada, *Profile of Canadian Youth in the Labour Market*, 2000, p. 20.

(51) Government of Canada, *The Canada We Want*, Speech from the Throne, 37th Parliament, Second Session.

Ensuring meaningful access to higher education for Aboriginal youth is an investment we make not only in their future, but our own as well. It is difficult to comprehend how we can deny any Aboriginal youth desirous of continuing their education a chance to do just that: a chance to lift themselves up, and out of, appalling social conditions.

As a society, we can question our responsibility for the misguided policies of the past, but should we not be morally and socially responsible to restore to Aboriginal youth today that which should never have been taken from those of yesterday: their hope for the future and a chance to take their rightful place in it? A university education, in itself, may not suffice in undoing the numerous social ills that plague so many innocent youth, but it is an important stepping-stone to restoring their well-being and confidence. A well-educated Aboriginal youth will be less vulnerable to a range of social and economic factors that erode their ability to be full, productive members of Canadian society, as well as to be able to contribute to the capacity of their own communities and institutions. To believe we owe them any less is unconscionable.

The Committee is further concerned that while funding for post-secondary education has increased slightly it has not kept pace with the rapid growth in the Aboriginal population or the rising costs of tuition.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada[52]
Post-Secondary Education Expenditures
1989-2003

1989-1990	$142,000,000
1990-1991	$189,000,000
1991-1992	$193,430,000
1992-1993	$200,842,000
1993-1994	$212,180,000
1994-1995	$246,874,000
1995-1996	$260,379,000
1996-1997	$268,596,000
1997-1998	$274,281,000
1998-1999	$281,924,000
1999-2000	$280,062,000
2000-2001	$283,978,000
2001-2002	$285,464,000
2002-2003	$297,882,000*
2003-2004	$303,840,000*

(52) Source: The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

Recommended Action

- **The federal government must ensure the eligibility criteria for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) be broadened to include all Aboriginal groups irrespective of status.**

- **The budget for the PSSSP must be enhanced to correspond to the increased levels of applicants that will result from the removal of status-based restrictions.**

- **Funding for the PSSSP must be appropriately indexed to correspond to rising tuition fees and the growth in the Aboriginal youth population.**

PART IV: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In cities all across Canada, existing services are failing to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people: that is the conclusion advanced by the 1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. With respect to Aboriginal youth, the Commission noted that their needs were often "overlooked or underestimated by service agencies developing and delivering programs."(53) This fits the evidence presented to us. Many Aboriginal organizations are not specifically or solely mandated to support the needs of youth. An example; while friendship centres offer some programs for urban youth, their resources must stretch over a number of areas. The result is an inadequate range and level of service for youth specific initiatives. Yet the needs of youth are complex, multi-faceted and growing. Most other Aboriginal service providers face an equally similar reality.

The evidence before this Committee also suggests that Aboriginal youth in urban areas are reluctant to use mainstream services, preferring instead to use Aboriginal community organizations as the primary service providers, or, in some instances, to act as intermediaries with mainstream agencies. Much of the reluctance has to do with the historical legacy of discrimination toward Aboriginal peoples.

This section presents the major challenges facing program development and service delivery for urban Aboriginal youth: the capacity of urban Aboriginal communities and young urban Aboriginals to tap into programs and services; the need for long term funding that overcomes the problems created by short term funding cycles; the need for taking a holistic approach; the provision of culturally appropriate programming; and, how mainstream service providers can identify programming gaps to better reach urban Aboriginal youth.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

1.1 Support for Community-based Urban Aboriginal Initiatives

Witnesses held a general consensus that a "one size fits" all approach to service delivery will not effectively reach urban Aboriginal residents, including youth. Overarching national or provincial goals are best met by having decisions on how to provide services agreed to by local communities and based on local circumstances and needs.

However, identifying and linking effectively with local urban Aboriginal communities can be problematic. The difficulty in urban areas is to determine who speaks for the community and in fact what is the community. According to one witness:

> Another cause of the difficult policy and programming environment is the near absence of effective urban Aboriginal political and policy voices. In many cities, urban Aboriginal people lack effective voices

(53) The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Urban Perspectives*, 1996, Volume 4, Chapter 7, p. 563.

> with which to participate in designing and implementing policies. This is to some extent understandable, since urban Aboriginal people are not homogeneous. Aboriginal people in every major city in Canada are drawn from any number of Aboriginal identities, nations and histories. Since so many cultures and identities are represented in urban settings, it is not surprising when representation is contested or absent.(54)

But this is not to say that, despite difficult challenges, urban Aboriginal people should not be encouraged to identify their own community in the context of their various needs. Moreover, we strongly believe that all levels of government should assist urban Aboriginal people develop their own solutions, rather than imposing them. Governments need to acknowledge that urban Aboriginal people know what their problems are, that they are in a much better position to identify appropriate solutions, and know that they need adequate resources applied in accordance with their own priorities to implement locally developed initiatives. That said, governments should not hold a purely passive funding role. Urban Aboriginal communities should not be expected to find all the solutions to their problems which exist in the broader context of Canadian society. Therefore, we strongly urge governments to acknowledge that community-designed initiatives are often more effective than programs developed in centralized government ministries. Accordingly, in structural terms, government departments need to delegate to Aboriginal service providers the authority to customize services and react flexibly to local circumstances.

1.2 Involve Youth in Decision-making Processes

Aboriginal youth want meaningful engagement with, and participation in, the debate about their future, and in any potential solutions. According to witnesses, ***it is critical that youth have a voice and sense of involvement and belonging in matters that affect them***.(55) Youth appearing before the Committee stressed the importance of being involved in the various aspects of program design, development and delivery.

> Aboriginal youth want to be included in the debate, not as subjects but as full and equal partnered participants. We do not want you to tell us what we should do. We want you and our own leaders to work with us to find out what exactly we can do, how far we can go, how high we can reach, what walls we can knock down, what barriers we can stretch, what vistas we can surpass, and what wonders we can accomplish. That is why we are here today.(56)

> We believe the most important change you could and should recommend is that youth need to be involved in all aspects of

(54) *Proceedings*, 17 June 2003, Mr. Calvin Hanselmann.

(55) *Proceedings*, 16 April 2002, Ms. Jamie Gallant, Youth and Labour Market Intern, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

(56) *Proceedings*, 16 April 2002, Ms. Jamie Gallant.

program development and delivery. We believe that projects that exist and are successful are that way because youth involvement has been maintained from start to finish.[57]

When youth hear about a government initiative, they would like to be consulted. They would like to gather in a room to discuss the issue and to provide some input.[58]

Aboriginal agencies and political organizations observed:

An overview of the growing literature on best practice shows it is focused very much on governance, administration, systemic aspects of organizations and accountability. One is that projects are most effective – and this was the number one thing our youth pointed out – when they are initiated and administered by youth. That is now the number one priority in our board's youth strategy: We must have youth-accountable and youth-administered projects.[59]

As recommended in the Assembly of First Nations' Urban Task Force Report, First Nations people, and more specifically First Nations youth, should design and deliver their own youth programs. They are best suited to make them relevant, sustainable and culturally specific to our youth.[60]

1.3 Foster Community and Youth Capacity Building

Youth, however, should not be set up to fail. Program and policy initiatives that are youth-driven will be most effective when partnered with or integrated into other community services and should involve the requisite input of elders, parents and mentors.

Finally, while greater efforts are being made to include youth in the development of policies and programs, this inclusion needs to be stabilized and entrenched in organizational structures and government processes. Some positive trends are emerging. More and more, Aboriginal organizations are establishing youth councils and youth advisory bodies. In May 1998, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and national Aboriginal leaders agreed to develop a *National Aboriginal Youth Strategy* (NAYS). The Strategy is intended to provide a framework to assist governments, institutions, and Aboriginal organizations in the development of policy and, design and delivery of programs and services for or accessed by Aboriginal youth. Youth play an integral part in the NAYS.

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(57) *Proceedings*, 11 June 2002, Ms. Ginger Gosnell, Youth Representative, Assembly of First Nations.

(58) *Proceedings*, 4 June 2002, Ms. Jelena Golic, Youth Intervenor, Native Women's Association of Canada.

(59) *Proceedings*, 1 May 2002, Gail Valaskakis, Director of Research, Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

(60) *Proceedings*, 11June 2002, Matthew Coon Come, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations.

While such measures are laudable, their reach is limited. There exists a need to involve Aboriginal youth much more broadly at the grass-roots level. Local community-based youth initiatives should ensure that youth input is obtained, and that youth are "part of the development, implementation, measurement and evaluation processes."[61] In this way, Aboriginal youth are mentored, empowered, and able to develop leadership skills in familiar and safe environments.

The expectation by governments that Aboriginal communities and youth will become increasingly involved in program and policy processes that affect them can place a heavy burden on the still comparatively small number of youth who have developed the skills and confidence to participate in such processes. Governments need to provide youth with the ability to design and deliver programs, and give them the concomitant training and resources to do so. It is crucial to strengthen the capacity of urban Aboriginal communities, and their youth, in order that they manage their interaction with government departments effectively and gain access to funding sources, rather than rely on a few overworked individuals.

Various witnesses identified the need to strengthen and encourage youth capacity building as part of an effective program development and service delivery model:

> How can you access funds if you do not have the capacity to write a decent proposal or to do community mapping and the organization that you are working for is stretched to the limit? They are stretched because so much is asked of them already for the funding they receive.[62]

We cannot reiterate enough that strategies that promote youth leadership skills and mentoring initiatives are crucial to developing this capacity.

1.4 Funding Certainty and Flexibility

A consistent complaint to the Committee is that funding for programs is too short to demonstrate successful outcomes. The needs of youth are complex and short-term approaches are bound to fail. Sustained and adequate funding is necessary to assist Aboriginal organizations within urban settings develop coordinated and holistic responses. Witnesses suggested that funding cycles of limited duration materially restrict the ability of Aboriginal agencies to develop the long-term strategies required to address the needs of youth:

> We have learned that it takes years to develop effective programs for native youth on the street. Funders need to appreciate that kids are very damaged. Robert was one of many who needed long-term service commitments. One-shot projects of two years at a time, anything less than five years, do not constitute money well spent. We

(61) Nova Lawson, Coordinator, Aboriginal Initiatives, Lakehead University, *Submission*, p. 20.

(62) *Proceedings*, 11 June 2003, Ms. Ginger Gosnell.

> should operate on the premise that the shorter the time frame of a given project, the less potential there is for effectiveness.[63]
>
> For the most part, current youth programming receives only minimal and short-term funding. It does not allow youth to focus on high-risk areas such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, violence, homelessness and sexual exploitation. Funding must be made available for awareness and prevention programs around these issues.[64]
>
> The projects that are funded are short-term projects, which does not allow us to implement long term plans.[65]

Subsistence on a revolving door of annual grants places an enormous administrative burden on Aboriginal organizations, which spend much of their year either completing complicated application forms for program funding or meeting reporting requirements to account for it. Little time is allowed to the initiatives themselves, for them to become independent, or for urban Aboriginal people to build trust in a service. We are not surprised that an ancillary complaint made by witnesses is that the federal government appears to fund a number of pilot projects, but not enough to sustain those that have demonstrated success. Moreover, agencies must also be assured that once funding is approved, they do not experience unnecessary bureaucratic delays in accessing those funds.

Witnesses also identified a problem in having to fit their funding requests to suit pre-determined criteria. As a result, agencies and organizations are often unable to apply for project funding that can be tailored to the specific needs of their community:

> If we are going to avoid barriers in the future and help Aboriginal youth, we recommend strongly that funding agencies should be more flexible within their terms and conditions to ensure that programs can be innovative and focused more on the actual needs of the community – in this case of the youth – and not solely on the funding agency's requirements.[66]

This issue resonates strongly with us: programs should fit the need. Funding agencies – be they federal, territorial or provincial – need to implement funding processes that are both flexible and sustainable. In addition, in order to ensure that smaller agencies are able to access program funding, applying for grants must be simplified.[67]

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(63) *Proceedings*, 18 February 2003, Ken Richard, Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services.

(64) *Proceedings*, 11 June 2002, Ms. Ginger Gosnell.

(65) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth Round Table, Mr. Jason Whitford, Regional Youth Coordinator, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

(66) *Proceedings*, 5 February 2003, Mr. Leonzo Barreno, Director, Aboriginal Youth Leadership Development Program, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

(67) *Proceedings*, 17 June 2003, Mr. Calvin Hanselmann.

1.5 Coordinated and Holistic Approach

Aboriginal youth have been poorly served by existing government program delivery models which stress services to individuals over holistic services to communities. Taking a holistic approach means that the individual rather than the problem becomes the focus. It recognizes that the well-being of youth cannot be divorced from the health of their communities and families. A strong connection to community and culture – necessary to provide youth a sense of belonging and cultural identity – is essential to ensuring positive outcomes for youth. We consistently heard that the needs of urban Aboriginal youth should not be considered in isolation from the needs of their families and communities, but rather be treated in a holistic way and integrated with programs that strengthen families. Governments should, therefore, work against the fragmentation of services – an approach that has had little past success. By contrast, community-strengthening strategies will buttress Aboriginal communities in their ability to support Aboriginal youth.

Ideally, a holistic approach would entail governments and departments pooling their resources, as distinct from simply coordinating them, so that interconnecting factors such as health, education, housing, and employment needs of individuals, families and communities can be met in a planned, structured and interconnected way. Horizontal government initiatives would assist Aboriginal service providers better plan and coordinate services to youth. The lack of program integration across sectors makes it difficult to respond comprehensively to the range of community needs:

> [M]ost federal programs are designed to address a particular aspect of what is a very complex set of circumstances and rarely are our programs flexible to respond to respond to varying local challenges and opportunities.(68)

This response condemns such services to a "crisis intervention model" and weakens an Aboriginal community's ability to provide an environment in which youth can thrive:

> It is quite often a reality within the Aboriginal community that a host of organizations compete for very limited resources. This makes the ability of one organization to provide holistic programming nearly impossible.(69)

Federal and provincial programs, which focus on an individual or specific aspect of an issue, have been criticized as operating within a silo mentality. The result is a plethora of similar programs, different tiers of service delivery and a complex array of funding services.

Unsurprisingly there is enormous stress on Aboriginal organizations trying to access government funds to meet the needs of Aboriginal youth. Applications for program funding can be extremely time-consuming. The fragmented nature of government programs and funding requires Aboriginal agencies to spend a good deal of their time and energy filling

(68) PCO, *Urban Aboriginal Strategy*: An Analysis, p. 15.

(69) *Proceedings*, 23 April 2002, Gerald Morin, President, Metis National Council.

out a multiplicity of grant applications chasing after program dollars for various government programs. The result is that those agencies that can prepare the best grant application, rather than the one most in need, is often favoured.

From a client perspective, the confused programming landscape can lead to frustration and act as a barrier to individuals attempting to navigate these services, or when they do, lead to the receipt of disjointed and uncoordinated services. We are particularly concerned that because of this "complex maze" of programming, youth find it difficult to access services because they have no clear idea of what is available to them. One witness observed:

> A more structured, operational and functional system might help increase awareness among youth with whom they should interact or seek support from.(70)

From a governmental perspective, the lack of coordination can often result in expensive and unnecessary duplication of programs. An environmental scan to determine what programs exist, where there is duplication across departments and organizations, where there are significant gaps in programming, as well as how best to maximize resources is urgently required.

The Committee recommends accordingly:

Recommended Action

- **The federal government must conduct a thorough review of programs available to Aboriginal youth, identifying gaps and duplication in programming.**

- **The federal government establish and appropriately fund a national data base to act as a "clearing house" to collect, share, monitor and disseminate information on successful youth programs, initiatives, best practices and youth role models.**

- **Governments, service providers, community organizations and youth should have access to the "clearing house."**

- **Based on the information collected, annual reports should be prepared to assist governments and service providers develop and support more effectively Aboriginal youth programming in urban areas.**

1.6 Aboriginal Service Delivery

We were told repeatedly that Aboriginal organizations are best able to provide services to urban Aboriginal people. For cultural reasons, many Aboriginal youth feel more comfortable accessing services from Aboriginal agencies and staff. Several witnesses testified to feeling uncomfortable using mainstream services. They feel the non-Aboriginal staff are often

(70) Nova Lawson, *Submission*, p. 24.

culturally unaware or disrespectful of Aboriginal cultures and practices, do not fully grasp their needs, and are negatively stereotyped. According to one witness:

> We will be raising a common theme that you have heard before. These services – education, human resources and health – are best delivered in an Aboriginal environment in the urban Aboriginal community. The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and other such friendship centres and Aboriginal agencies throughout the country have very high success rates in the matters because we understand Aboriginal youth.(71)

Not surprisingly, Aboriginal youth prefer to access services delivered by Aboriginal agencies and staffed by Aboriginal people who are from the community, have similar backgrounds and a better appreciation of their needs. In some instances, Aboriginal youth prefer that their peers, particularly with regard to certain aspects of sexual health, recreation, and street life, deliver programs.

1.7 Culturally Appropriate Programming and Status Blind Service Delivery

Witnesses appearing before the Committee were adamant that services delivered to Aboriginal people be culturally appropriate. This Committee agrees: based on the evidence heard, we feel strongly that Aboriginal youth will be best served by culturally appropriate programs, provided by culturally appropriate organizations. The availability of such programs is especially important in urban areas, where youth, are most apt to feel cut off from their families, traditions and culture.

No consensus emerged, however, with regard to whether services in urban area should be status-blind, that is targeted to all Aboriginal groups regardless of status, or whether services should be directed toward particular groups (i.e., Métis, First Nations or Inuit specific). In its consideration of this issue, the *1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* recognized that many Aboriginal people were opposed to status-blind delivery, but ultimately concluded that it was the most efficient use of scarce resources because it avoids duplication of services.

This Committee feels strongly that Aboriginal youth will be best served by culturally appropriate programs, provided by culturally appropriate organizations.

A recent survey conducted by the Canada West Foundation [November 2002], in which over 110 Aboriginal participants involved in urban Aboriginal policy-making and programming were interviewed, found that, among those interviewed, status-blind service delivery was recognized as achieving the best results. In his appearance before this Committee, the author of that study suggested that:

(71) *Proceedings*, 5 February 2003, Mr. Robert Adams, Executive Director, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

> Exclusive identity-based funding policies and programming can mean unnecessary and expensive duplication. Working with one identity-specific group at a time can lead to many complications and negative outcomes. Therefore, respect for the diversity seen in urban Aboriginal communities should take the form of policies and programming that have, when appropriate, specific cultural components for different Aboriginal nations. At the same time, however, programming should be status blind – respectful of cultural traditions among Aboriginal people while being available to all urban Aboriginal people. In addition, governments should encourage and reward cooperation by working with Aboriginal organizations that are willing to work with one another on urban issues.(72)

The Committee is of the opinion that given the diverse nature of the urban Aboriginal population and to avoid further splintering of programs, status-blind service delivery for the majority of programs is the most the efficient model of delivering services to Aboriginal people in urban areas. We do, however, feel that certain programs, particularly those supporting cultural maintenance – such as language initiatives, support for cultural institutions and Aboriginal cultures in urban areas – should be promoted and targeted to specific groups. Given the particular challenges Aboriginal people face in maintaining their culture and identity in urban environments, governments should support initiatives to promote Aboriginal cultures in urban areas.

1.8 Suggestions for Mainstream Service Providers

A number of cultural barriers may discourage Aboriginal youth from using mainstream services. The historical legacy of discrimination and the accompanying feelings of distrust, shame and perceptions of prejudice by non-Aboriginal service providers, make many Aboriginal youth reluctant to access mainstream services. Not surprisingly, in such circumstances, Aboriginal youth will seek out Aboriginal organizations staffed by Aboriginal people, whom they feel have a better understanding of their needs.

The Committee is concerned, however, that, in some instances, the needs of Aboriginal youth may go unmet if Aboriginal service providers do not have the resources to deal with the caseload and certain services are simply not available through them. This is especially problematic in urban areas where culturally appropriate settings may not always be readily accessible.

Non-Aboriginal organizations can provide services to Aboriginal people when done in an appropriate fashion with Aboriginal workers. The Committee believes that it is important for non-Aboriginal staff of mainstream agencies servicing a significant Aboriginal client base to undertake cross-cultural education. In this way, non-Aboriginal staff are better able to develop an understanding of Aboriginal culture and history and therefore more likely to be empathetic when dealing with Aboriginal youth.

(72) *Proceedings*, 17 June 2003, Mr. Calvin Hanselmann.

> There is a need to encourage educators, employers, and support workers about the needs and differing issues impacting Aboriginal youth. Initiatives need to be established to help these populations "get to know each other" and to learn about what is expected and/or anticipated of youth, and vice versa.[73]

There is an increasing recognition by non-Aboriginal service providers that when mainstream agencies are staffed by Aboriginal people, Aboriginal youth are more likely to access those services. It may, however, not always be possible or feasible for mainstream agencies to employ Aboriginal staff. In such cases, we believe an alternative approach is for such agencies to nominate an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to assist Aboriginal clients as well as undertake community outreach work aimed at building trust among youth for the service. Every effort should be made to ensure that the individual acting as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer is Aboriginal. Where this is not possible, appropriate cultural training should be provided to individuals.

The committee was struck by the success and uniqueness of an analogous initiative undertaken by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. Under its Aboriginal Employment Initiative (AEI), the Director of the AEI, in this case a young dynamic First Nations woman acts as a liaison between the business community and Aboriginal community. By encouraging communication between these two groups, the initiative hopes to build capacity within the Aboriginal community, meet the needs of labour, and foster better relationships. Remarkably, it is the only initiative of its kind in the country.

(73) Nova Lawson, *Submission*, p. 12.

BEST PRACTICE

Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce: Aboriginal Employment Initiative

Mission Statement: To develop and implement strategic partnerships among the Manitoba business and Aboriginal communities to facilitate and promote employment of Aboriginal peoples in the province.

Initiated in March 2000 to promote new employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Business Council of Manitoba (BCM), Manitoba Education and Training, and Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC) have developed a strategic partnership in the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce Aboriginal Employment Initiative (AEI).

A first in Canada, this two-year pilot project was custom designed to assist Manitoba businesses to understand the benefits and business case of Aboriginal human resource strategies to increase employment and enhance retention of Aboriginal peoples in the workplace.

Under the stewardship of the Director, Aboriginal Employment Initiative, the project aims to:

- ***develop partnerships between the business and Aboriginal communities leading to new employment and economic opportunities;***
- ***explore, access and support innovative employment and retention strategies;***
- ***promote information and resource initiatives that advance the Understanding of Aboriginal human resource development issues; and***
- ***identify, evaluate and promote career development information and training initiatives for Aboriginal peoples.***

Creating linkages between Manitoba's business and the Aboriginal communities was the starting point of the project. Employers seeking to further develop and expand their Aboriginal workforce were facilitated with Aboriginal organizations providing services in preparing the Aboriginal peoples for employment opportunities.

The Committee believes strongly in the benefits of mainstream organizations building bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The importance of encouraging personal and long-term relationships with Aboriginal people as an effective means in breaking down some of the barriers that currently exist should not be underestimated.

While we cannot make recommendations outside of our jurisdiction, we offer the following observation:

Committee Observation for Mainstream Service Providers

- ***Non-Aboriginal organizations delivering federal services to a significant Aboriginal client base or which provide Aboriginal specific services, should strive to employ appropriately trained Aboriginal staff and provide non-Aboriginal staff with cross-cultural training.***

- ***Alternatively, where appropriate, non-Aboriginal organizations should attempt to ensure they have on staff at least one Aboriginal Liaison Officer to help foster confidence in, and awareness of, mainstream services.***

1.9 Conclusion: *Key Principles for Effective Service Delivery*

The preceding section of the report was based on suggestions witnesses made to us for enhancing the delivery of programs and services for urban Aboriginal youth and their communities. Synthesizing that evidence, we were able to extrapolate a number of key principles for improving service delivery in urban Aboriginal communities upon which the Committee bases the following recommendation:

Recommended Action

The federal government should ensure the following principles are applied to programs that they fund for the delivery of services to urban Aboriginal youth:

- **Involve to the greatest extent possible urban Aboriginal youth or their appropriate representative organizations in the identification of needs, priority setting, program design and service delivery.**

- **To the greatest extent possible, programs be developed locally with a high degree of Aboriginal youth involvement and ownership.**

- **Funding be guaranteed with sufficient time as to allow the program to achieve its objectives.**

- **There be flexible funding arrangements to minimize the administrative burden on participating Aboriginal organizations.**

- **To the greatest extent possible, and where appropriate, funding be provided directly to urban Aboriginal service providers in order to lessen administrative costs;**

- **Resources should be dedicated to Aboriginal youth capacity and leadership building.**

- **Explore the potential for pooling program funding with any complementary federal programs, other levels of government or appropriate organizations.**

- **Include evaluation processes that incorporate community feedback.**

- **Identify the extent to which programs overlap or duplicate services provided by other levels of government and action proposed to address this, if required.**

- **Where programs are delivered by mainstream agencies with a significant Aboriginal client base, strive to employ appropriately trained Aboriginal staff and provide non-Aboriginal staff with cross-cultural training.**

- **Provide sustained funding for pilot projects that have demonstrated success and integrate these initiatives into departmental practice.**

SERVICE DELIVERY REFORM: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

If the gap in life opportunities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban residents is to be closed, federal, provincial and municipal governments must commit themselves to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Aboriginal communities; program flexibility; and coordination between government agencies with a focus on local communities and outcomes. As one witness observed:

> First, and most important, federal and provincial governments must be in urban Aboriginal policy together. The two levels of government need to set aside their historical posturing about not being responsible so that they may formally accept their shared responsibility for urban Aboriginal policy. Once that responsibility is accepted, institutionalizing intergovernmental coordination and cooperation will be much easier to do and will be much more effective. In short, the federal and provincial governments need to cooperate on policy-making and programming, coordinate their efforts through common institutions and share the costs.(74)

The Committee feels strongly that governments in each jurisdiction must work together to develop formalized joint policy mechanisms aimed at breaking down the silos that have resulted in the fragmentation of services to Aboriginal: One witness commented that:

> Being horizontally challenged is a huge problem for governments. Getting departments to break out of what is referred to as "stovepipes" and work together is a significant challenge for both the federal and provincial governments. There is a limited degree of

(74) *Proceedings*, 17 June 2003, Mr. Calvin Hanselmann.

> flexibility in some of these programs. Particularly at the local level, when people identify an issue that can be improved upon, if it does not fit within the four corners of a program, there is nothing they can do. We must find a way to be more cooperative across departments.(75)

The recent past has seen a number of promising initiatives that have sought to improve horizontal and vertical linkages within and between governments. Some noteworthy examples include:

- **The Urban Aboriginal Strategy:** In 1998, the federal government launched its Urban Aboriginal Strategy in response to the pressing socio-economic needs of urban Aboriginal people. The goal is to develop specific collaborative arrangements and agreements between the federal government, other governments, and local Aboriginal groups in order to better coordinate programs and services. Relying on *existing* federal programs and services, the UAS also seeks to improve coordination within the federal government. While the UAS was intended to be national in scope, it has only been implemented, to date, in the four western provinces and Ontario. In 2003, the UAS was renewed for a two-year period, with $17 million allocated to pilot projects to explore new ways to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in urban areas.

- **Winnipeg Core Initiative:** The Winnipeg Core Area Initiative is a tripartite agreement by the provincial, federal and municipal governments to revitalize Winnipeg's inner city and improve economic opportunities for inner-city residents. Among other things, the Core Area Initiative provides industrial development support, housing incentives, and funding for training, employment and strategic capital projects for neighbourhood and community development. Aboriginal people constitute a significant portion – sometimes a majority – of the populations of these neighbourhoods and have benefited greatly from the impact of such programs. The levels of government have worked closely with the community – including a meaningful urban Aboriginal voice – on implementing programs that match local priorities.

- **The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee:** The Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee (EUAAC) is one example of how municipal Aboriginal affairs committees could provide an effective mechanism for representing urban Aboriginal concerns. The overall function of the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee is to act as a catalyst to promote the awareness and development of all Aboriginal people in the City of Edmonton. The EUAAC works with all levels of government, groups, and agencies that are addressing issues and concerns of Aboriginal people living in the City of Edmonton. The Committee works to promote urban Aboriginal citizens, agencies, organizations, businesses, and Aboriginal civic involvement and participation. It also advocates on behalf of urban Aboriginal people, and liaises with the Mayor and City Councillors through meetings, reports, and other projects and events throughout the year.

(75) *Proceedings*, 27 November 2001, Mr. Fred Caron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Privy Council Office.

- **National Aboriginal Youth Strategy:** Federal/provincial/territorial and Aboriginal representatives participated in developing the *National Aboriginal Youth Strategy* (NAYS). The NAYS is intended to provide a framework to assist government institutions and Aboriginal organizations in the development of policy, design and delivery of programs and services for, or accessed by, Aboriginal youth.

- **Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative (CUAI):** The Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative is a partnership involving federal, municipal, and provincial governments, Aboriginal organizations and service providers to address the lack of involvement by the urban Aboriginal community in policy and program planning development. The CUAI attempts to work within existing organizations to minimize duplication of efforts. Central to the success of this initiative is the willingness of governments to partner with one another and with Aboriginal organizations, and to recognize that the community must be meaningfully engaged.

Other notable initiatives include:

- Canada and Manitoba worked cooperatively to establish the Single Window Initiative in Winnipeg and in Saskatchewan ASK-Sask, a virtual single window kiosk was developed to provide information on Aboriginal services and programs. These initiatives are aimed at improving access to services;

- Saskatchewan's 2001 *A Framework for Cooperation Policy Statement* establishes a positive environment for provincial and federal cooperation; and

- the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding signed between Canada and Manitoba to cooperate on urban Aboriginal issues.

What these measures show is that while federal and provincial governments continue to adhere to their jurisdictional positions, there is increasing recognition that solutions to urban Aboriginal issues will involve collaborative efforts among all levels of governments as well as the engagement of Aboriginal community representatives.

However, such initiatives, regardless of how promising they are, risk becoming ad hoc responses unless specific responsibility for policy leadership and action in this area is assumed. Given Canada's historic relationship to Aboriginal peoples, the Committee believes that the federal government should take a leadership role in representing urban Aboriginal populations and coordinating intergovernmental initiatives.

Accordingly, we recommend that:

Recommended Action

By virtue of its fundamental, constitutional and fiduciary relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples:

- **The federal government should take a leadership role in coordinating multi-lateral program and policy initiatives for urban Aboriginal people.**

- **The federal government, through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, should act to facilitate the development of formal intergovernmental mechanisms to address the broad policy concerns of urban Aboriginal people in Canada and break down existing silos in program development and service delivery.**

- **Intergovernmental mechanisms must include and engage appropriate urban Aboriginal organizations.**

BUILDING ON SUCCESS: THE URBAN MULTIPURPOSE URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH INITIATIVE

Aboriginal organizations and youth spoke very highly of the federal government's Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC) Initiative. Across the country, we were told the UMAYC Initiative has provided youth with much needed resources to design and develop community-based initiatives that respond to their local needs. Here are but a few examples of the praise we heard across the country for this initiative:

> We recommend that the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres, UMAYC, initiative be renewed for an additional five years to build upon its success to date.(76)

> UMAYC resources were used to compliment and build on existing programs and initiatives while still adhering to UMAYC specific program guidelines.(77)

> I want to talk about urban multi-purpose Aboriginal centre money, and how important it is to organizations like mine. They are up for renewal this year so I would like the Senate to push that. Continue with the UMAYC dollars – Urban Multi-purpose Aboriginal Youth Centre money. I would really encourage the Senate to push that

(76) *Proceedings*, 30 April 2002, Ms Jaime Koebel, President, Aboriginal Youth Council, National Association of Friendship Centres.

(77) *Proceedings*, 23 April 2002, Mr. Gerald Morin, President, Métis National Council.

> money through. It is the saviour to Aboriginal youth. It is something that helps us guarantee that all Aboriginal youth will join in these programs without having to be asked to leave because they do not belong to a certain Aboriginal group.(78)
>
> The best-practices policies and programs in Montreal are the Urban MultiPurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre, which is based in the Friendship Centre, and the Montreal Aboriginal Youth Council.(79)
>
> The UMAYC program was a blessing in disguise for more than just our project … That has given our people a lot more opportunity to get that extra service, extra help that they need in the community. I applaud Canadian Heritage for getting this project going. I do not know if Sheila Copps really knew what she did when she got this project going, but it has helped out the Aboriginal community a lot. I applaud her for it.(80)
>
> Our community relations and recruitment program has two unique programs that we are really proud of; both are funded by Canadian Heritage and UMAYC dollars.(81)
>
> Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres, which is a wonderful example of pulling together the six best practice items I mentioned into a flexible format that is available in urban areas.(82)

The UMAYC Initiative incorporates several key principles and best practices for effective service delivery discussed above. Notably, it is designed to be culturally appropriate; locally delivered and designed; flexible and responsive to local priorities; and developed in close collaboration with youth.

The UMAYC initiative was a five-year (1998-2003) $100 million federal commitment to improve the economic, social and personal prospects of urban Aboriginal youth by supporting the establishment of a network of urban multipurpose youth centres. Funding for this initiative was recently renewed for an additional two years.

Witnesses registered two crucial reservations about the program. First, that it was of limited duration .We know, however, that Aboriginal youth require sustained, rather than cyclic, efforts to address the many challenges they face. The second complaint was that UMAYC funding was often slow in coming. The delays in obtaining approved funding, we were

(78) *Proceedings*, 12 February 2003, John Potskin, Director, Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth.

(79) *Proceedings*, 26 March 2003, Mr. Eric Ravenelle, Secretary, Board of Directors, Native Friendship Centre of Montreal.

(80) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Mr. Lyle Donald, Coordinator, Métis Cultural Dance Society.

(81) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Mr. Lewis Cardinal, Director of Native Student Services, University of Alberta.

(82) *Proceedings*, 1 May 2002, Ms. Gail Valaskasis, Director of Research, Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

told, created a number of hardships for service providers. For instance, agencies were often faced with having to incur large bank fees in order to continue offering a program or service to its clients until such time as financing arrived. Apart from the human costs, it is not in the public's interest to have public monies wasted on bank service charges.

Despite these reservations, the UMAYC Initiative has met with great success in creating positive programming for Aboriginal youth living in cities. Therefore, the Committee strongly believes that the federal government continue to support this initiative and build upon its success.

We recommend accordingly that:

Recommended Action

By virtue of the success of the Urban Aboriginal Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre (UMAYC) Initiative and its importance to urban Aboriginal youth, the federal government, through the Minister of Canadian Heritage, should:

- **Continue its support for the UMAYC Initiative by committing sustained, long-term funding for the initiative.**

- **Funding allocations for the UMAYC Initiative should be increased so that urban Aboriginal communities and youth are better able to build upon its successes.**

PART V: THE NEEDS OF YOUTH

Our Aboriginal youth want what all other young persons in Canada want – hope.

Ms. Jamie Gallant,
Youth and Labour Market Intern, Congress of Aboriginal People

Of all issues affecting urban Aboriginal people, some of the most pressing and urgent are the needs of Aboriginal youth. We are struck by the absolute necessity of addressing their needs – particularly those estranged from their cultural heritage and the broader community in which they reside. In evidence to the Committee, Aboriginal youth have been variously described as:

- a generation experiencing a sense of hopelessness for the future because of the barriers and discrimination they face;(83)
- vulnerable to poverty, cultural and social alienation;(84) and
- live in a world characterized by poverty, violence and racism.(85)

It is therefore depressingly unsurprising that, despite the probability that suicide rates are under-recorded, the Aboriginal youth suicide rate in Canada is estimated to be five to six times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth.(86)

A MULTITUDE OF PRESSURE POINTS

In a compilation of evidence to the Committee, Members identified the following problems facing Aboriginal youth, particularly in urban areas:

- loss of identity, language and culture (which engenders feelings of isolation and alienation in an urban setting, makes gang involvement more attractive);
- low levels of education, poor school attendance, high unemployment levels with poor job prospects;

(83) *Proceedings*, 16 April, Dwight Dorey, National Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

(84) *Proceedings*, 11 June 2002, Matthew Coon Come, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations.

(85) *Proceedings*, 18 February 2003, Mr. Randy Jackson, Aboriginal Persons Living HIV/AIDS Coordination Programs, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

(86) Canada, *Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicide in First Nations*, Report of the Advisory Group on Suicide Prevention.

- lack of parental involvement and support in their daily lives (dysfunctional families, absentee parents);

- being young single parents with poor parenting skills;

- substance abuse (alcohol, marijuana, narcotics, petrol, glue);

- physical and emotional abuse (inter-generational effects of residential school system, sexual abuse, family violence);

- difficulties obtaining accommodation (cannot afford adequate housing, come to urban areas without a place to stay, using emergency shelters);

- difficulties accessing services (which can range from not having enough money for transportation to not being aware of programs and services available);

- poverty (affecting health, contributing to poor lifestyles and higher rates of criminal activity); and

- racism and discrimination (affects self-esteem and confidence, fosters hostility toward broader society, feelings of marginalization and alienation).

Having identified some of the more salient issues affecting youth, the question is how to foster a more constructive dynamic for urban Aboriginal youth and mitigate their social exclusion? Members of the Committee have observed that there is no single answer. Rather, the solution is provided by a weave of supports, comprising education, recreation, urban transition services, labour market readiness, sound parenting skills, as well as strong community, cultural and family supports. Without these necessary supports, young Aboriginal people and their families can find it difficult to overcome the challenges they face and achieve a quality of life comparable to other Canadians. This section discusses some possible measures to create opportunities for youth and alleviate some of the pressures they face.

THE NEEDS OF YOUTH

1.1 Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres

Urban Aboriginal youth centres are a key component to providing that vital weave of support for Aboriginal youth. Time and again, Aboriginal youth emphasized to the Committee the need for facilities where they could come together in a comfortable and welcoming environment. They talked of a safe place, free from alcohol and drugs, where they could be with peers, develop their interests, learn from elders, or simply hang out. This is particularly important in urban centres. There was consensus among witnesses that youth centres in cities were needed to assist youth making the transition from reserves and rural communities to urban life.

> When we look at the demographics and population trends, we know that urban communities need to have urban centres for youth … Aboriginal youth need a place to go and belong and to be able to access a home away from home in urban centres. That is what our young people want in our community.[87]

It is anticipated that urban Aboriginal youth centres would help counteract the cultural and social dislocation many young people experience, either as new arrivals to the city or as long-term residents. By establishing places where youth can connect with their cultural traditions, their peers and elders, as well as explore opportunities for growth a city can provide, youth centres act as a much-needed positive alternative to street life or gang involvement. One young man told us how the Keewatin Winnipeg Youth Centre offers a healthy alternative to otherwise risky behaviours:

> Some of our youth have had a history with involvement in gangs and street life, drugs and alcohol abuse. The program has helped and made an impact for youth as a positive alternative to that kind of lifestyle.[88]

For many urban Aboriginal youth there is no readily accessible Aboriginal community to which they can turn to for support. As a result, many experience deep feelings of alienation. Such feelings are amplified in urban areas where the portrayal of mainstream culture is so dominant. One group spoke of the "hardships youth face in cities because they are isolated from their people and culture."[89] Similarly, another group spoke of the challenges for young urban people struggling to maintain or come to terms with their identity in environments which "are indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal cultures."[90] Youth centres can offer a focal point for Aboriginal youth coming to, or living in, urban areas.

Overwhelmingly, youth indicated that they required positive spaces where they could go and not be treated as somehow defective, as problems to be fixed. Whereas the vast majority of programming is geared to the social pathology of being urban and Aboriginal, we were told by youth that they wanted a supportive place to go where they could tap into their interests, develop their talents and nurture their leadership abilities: a place where they were more than just the sum of their problems:

> When I first moved down here, there was no place where I could go and just hang out and feel good about myself without walking into some sort of centre that would probably label me as some kid with no place to go and in need of a hot drink and a meal. And I think that is just sad. We should have resources, programs that are accessible to us that will allow us to just hang out, to connect with

(87) *Proceedings*, 1 April 2003, Anne Lesage, Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre.

(88) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Winnipeg Youth Round Table, Mr. Jon Henderson, Youth Project Coordinator, Keewatin Winnipeg Youth Initiative.

(89) *Proceedings*, 12 February 2003, Mr. John Potskin.

(90) PCO, *Urban Aboriginal Strategy: An Analysis*, p. 1.

> other young native people. There is no place I can really do that if I do not have a label as some person with troubles.[91]

In Winnipeg, the Committee had an opportunity to visit a youth-operated facility in the north end of the city: the Keewatin Winnipeg Youth Initiative (KWYI). Members of the Committee were warmly welcomed by the youth coordinators and participants, and were able to see and hear, first hand, the difference this facility makes to the lives of its young people. One witness told us how the KWYI helped him make positive changes to his pervious lifestyle:

> I was grateful for coming across the people that I met here … because at the age of 22 I decided to make a transition in my lifestyle. I was an active and recognized member of the streets here in the North End … I was grateful for the assistance I received and taking that opportunity to display to myself and to my family what I really can be.[92]

Another young man talked about how he found support and a sense of belonging among his peers:

> When I came to Winnipeg I ran into some problems, as in gangs and things … I needed a way out and it wasn't too easy. That's when I came here. I was able to sit down with them (the youth coordinators) and they seen exactly what I could do. Chris and John told me they knew what kind of guy I was and knew what I could do, and they just needed to help me find it … and now it's a lot easier when I have problems here in the city. I could turn to anyone of these people and they would back me up one hundred percent.[93]

We are convinced that the sense of belonging the youth felt at the centre, the pride they took in it, as well as in each other's success, was because it belonged to them – to all of them. The centre is truly a safe haven for these young people; a refuge from an often harsh and alien environment. It is difficult to imagine the sense of community that exists at the centre could be achieved in a mainstream institution. That sense of belonging comes from being surrounded by people who have had similar experiences, share a common history, and are fighting the same struggles as oneself. Together these youth help each other build the confidence necessary to be successful in the broader community. One young woman told us how being a part of the KWYI helped her build confidence and self-esteem:

> I had to quit school when I was 17 because I had to start paying rent. So the program helped me get back into high school … I plan to graduate and got to the University of Manitoba and pursue my long-

(91) *Proceedings*, 18 March 2003, Vancouver Roundtable, Ms. Ginger Gosnell.

(92) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003,Winnipeg Youth Round Table, Mr. Ron Chartrand.

(93) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Winnipeg Round Table, youth participant.

term goal of being a social worker. Now I am confident I can do that.[94]

And, finally, that:

The Keewatin Youth Initiative is probably the best program I have seen implemented, because not only does it focus on the recreational aspect, it delivers on all four aspects of personal growth. For me that is a successful youth centre. And that is what we are encouraging in our communities to pursue as well as for their own communities, taking the holistic approach. It is more than just recreation, you have to instil values and create a sense of identity at the same time.[95]

BEST PRACTICE

The Keewatin Winnipeg Youth Initiative

The Keewatin Winnipeg Youth Initiative is a youth-driven, community-based initiative. Its facility is located in a northern neighbourhood in Winnipeg, providing easy access for a community youth resource centre.

Established in the summer of 2001, KWYI provides a safe and positive environment for youth and has helped build a safer and healthier community.

The KWYI has two on-site youth coordinators, and there are currently 32 youth participating in the second phase of the project.

The KWYI project objectives are to provide the skills, resources, and opportunities for youth to become employable or further their education; provide understanding and awareness in the areas of recreation, health and culture; provide volunteer and work placement opportunities; provide training and workshops in areas affecting youth; assist youth in building a career path.

The KWYI is open to Aboriginal youth aged 15-19, who have been unemployed and out of school for a period of at least 3 months.

(94) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Winnipeg Youth Round Table, Ms. Tracey Bradburn.

(95) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Kathleen McKay, AMC Youth Council, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

It is anticipated that urban Aboriginal youth centres will provide holistic programming – a continuum of care needed to improve the lives of urban Aboriginal youth. In fulfilling the social, educational, spiritual, recreational, and artistic needs of urban Aboriginal youth, such facilities would move beyond the current "crisis intervention model" to one that supports and develops the aspirations of Aboriginal youth. According to one young woman:

> The provision through youth centres of basic health services and mental health services is important. Aboriginal youth want and need somewhere to hang out and to spend time so that they are deterred from engaging in destructive behaviour. Centres of that kind would be important. There are some excellent centres now. It would be a challenge to try to fill those gaps, to assess the successful ones and ensure that they are distributed in different communities.(96)

In Vancouver, the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) is establishing such a centre for their youth population. The centre, which is to be completed in the next two to four years, would include a proposed gymnasium, theatre, café, carving studio, youth and pre-teen drop-in centres, an alternate school, pre-employment services, a computer lab, and second-stage housing facilities.(97) In describing the need for such centres to help Aboriginal youth overcome the pressures of urban life, the UNYA told the Committee:

> There is a solution to this problem in that we can offer young folks a place that they call their own. They need a place that they can control and govern...We need a place where the kids can have fun again. We do not have children that are having fun anymore. We are always too busy trying to fix them. We are always trying to fix them and heal them, but we do not play with them. We need to do more of that. It is critical that the children have fun.(98)

The location of youth centres should also be carefully considered. According to witnesses, Aboriginal youth preferred accessing programs and services in their own neighbourhoods rather than having to travel downtown. One young woman summed up her hesitancy in accessing youth services offered by the friendship centre located in Vancouver's notorious downtown east side in this way:

> I did not go to the east side because I was warned by my family that the east side was a pretty bad place, but that is the central location of where are services are. So I pretty much avoided that area.(99)

Witnesses to the Committee unanimously recommended the establishment of Aboriginal youth centres: a fact that has registered strongly with us. We have been impressed

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(96) *Proceedings*, 4 June 2002, Ms. Jelena Golic, Youth Intervenor, Native Women's Association of Canada.

(97) Urban Native Youth Association, *Submission.*

(98) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Jerry Adams, Urban Native Youth Association.

(99) *Proceedings*, 18 March 2003, Vancouver Youth Round Table, Ms. Amy Parent.

by what we have seen and heard of their potential. Acknowledging the need to ease some of the pressures and challenges Aboriginal youth face in the city, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* also underscored the importance of establishing youth centres.

Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government, in collaboration with its provincial counterparts and appropriate urban Aboriginal youth representatives and agencies, should provide capital funding for the establishment of Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres in urban communities where there is a significant Aboriginal youth population. Centres should be located in areas where they can be readily accessed by youth.**

Where appropriate, urban Aboriginal youth centres might be established in existing facilities such as friendship centres, community centres or schools. However, we stress that witnesses have recommended that, where numbers warrant, separate youth centres be established.

1.2 Urban Transition Programs

There are a variety of reasons for which Aboriginal youth move to the city. Common among them is a desire to access enhanced education and employment opportunities. Whatever the reasons for moving to a city, many Aboriginal youth experience a profound sense of cultural dislocation and powerlessness upon arrival. Despite a desire to carve out a better future for themselves in the city, many are simply unprepared to take up the challenges of urban living. Consistently, we heard evidence that:

> Many youth lack basic living/social skills, awareness of how to deal with major social issues, and how to seek out opportunities to truly feel a genuine part of the broader society.(100)

Thus, without the necessary skills, the transition to a successful urban life is especially problematic. In the absence of sufficient personal resources and community supports, many young Aboriginal people risk turning to other avenues to find a sense of belonging. Aboriginal youth gangs often become a substitute for that sense of community, connectedness and identity that is missing for many Aboriginal youth.

Discrimination is also a harsh reality many Aboriginal youth must contend with when moving to a city, and is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of urban life. Racism can, and often does, exert a tremendous hardship on these young lives. According to witnesses:

(100) Nova Lawson, *Submission*, p. 3.

- Nothing is more devastating to a young person, no matter what their ancestry, than racism.[101]

- Racism, discrimination and a general lack of awareness of Aboriginal history continue to impact youth in all settings within an urban environment.[102]

- The effects of discrimination are internalized and manifest themselves in feelings of isolation, leading to low self-esteem which may never go away.[103]

This Committee believes that discrimination, whether real or perceived, subtle or institutionalized, has reduced the appropriateness of mainstream programs for Aboriginal youth and limited their willingness to access services.

We have heard from a broad range of Aboriginal organizations, community leaders and youth themselves that positive supports and advocacy services are required to assist youth successfully adjust and adapt to urban living. We were troubled by the fact that youth are often entirely unaware of what programs and services are available to them, where to access services, or with whom to speak to get information on what supports are available.

There is a need to ensure that youth are provided with a higher quality of service in regard to urban transition. Despite its necessity, governments have paid scant attention to this type of programming. In its inventory of programs and services available to urban Aboriginal people, the Canada West Foundation found that:

> Although the transition from rural and reserve areas to a major city can be much like immigrating to Canada from another country, **we determined that that Government of Canada does not fund transition programs for Aboriginal peoples to the extent that it funds transition programs for recent immigrants to Canada**. Urban Aboriginal transition programming receives less than 5 cents for every dollar spent on immigrant settlement and transition.[104] [Emphasis Added]

As a result, much needed programming required for a successful transition to urban centres, or to improve quality of life in the city, are not available or in very short supply.

(101) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Elaine Cowan, President, Anokiiwin Group.

(102) Nova Lawson, *Submission.*

(103) Manitoba Indian Education, *Submission*, p. 6.

(104) *Proceedings*, 17 June 2003, Mr. Calvin Hanselmann.

Best Practice
Urban Transition Programming

Manitoba Indian Education Association Inc. (MIEA) is a non-profit student services organization. As part of its mandate, the MIEA provides Aboriginal youth who have come to the city to study with liaison and advocacy services needed to adapt to their new environment.

Moreover, we find that linking urban transition programming between rural and urban centres has not been adequately explored. According to witnesses, ***the skills, training and experience which youth take with them when they migrate, to a very great degree, determine the success which will be encountered on arrival***. Despite the stated importance of the pre-migration phase to successful adaptation to urban life, it would appear that little or no pre-migration counselling is taking place. Moreover, from a demographic perspective, we know there is high degree of circulation between reserve communities and urban areas. According to one witness:

> It is difficult to distinguish between urban issues and issues impacting reserves. As an example, when Aboriginal street gangs form in Winnipeg, they do their recruiting on the reserve, in jails and so on. Housing problems on a reserve might cause people to move into the cities. Therefore, there is a huge relation between the two issues. We must take a holistic approach to the problem because there is a definite connection.(105)

Thus, establishing a broader network between urban organizations and reserve and rural communities to ensure that youth are better served in their transition to urban settings should be considered.

Based on the evidence before us, the Committee feels strongly that urban youth transition services should be established, in major urban centres in Canada, to ensure that those youth migrating to cities are met with positive supports and are directed to appropriate organizations that can assist them with their transitional issues. Some key services might include:

- housing supports and referrals;
- employment and training services;
- English literacy skills;

(105) *Proceedings*, 27 November 2001, Mr. Fred Caron.

- counselling services, including pre-migration counselling;
- advocacy and liaison;
- education and career planning; and
- information on available programs and services.

These services, in turn, should be linked to communities of origin through effective partnerships. In this critical transition period for youth, we believe transition programming will help to minimize feelings of isolation that comes from being away from one's community; assist youth integrate positively into the wider community; and prevent youth from turning to others to gain a sense of belonging, such as youth gangs, or other groups which may have a negative influence on them.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government, in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal organizations, should establish community-based, culturally appropriate urban Aboriginal youth transition programs. Efforts should be made to link Aboriginal youth transition services to reserve and rural communities.**

1.3 Sport, Art and Recreation

> *One of the things that kept me on the straight and narrow was being involved in sport and recreation. I think that if I did not have that outlet I would not be sitting here today …*
>
> ***Mr. Rob Campre,***
> **Director, Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee**

The positive benefits of sport and art for youth are well-documented. The Committee believes that Aboriginal youth, like all youth, require recreational outlets and positive pathways for their energies. Sport, art and recreational activities provide young people with healthy alternatives to drinking and drug use. They are also effective at relieving boredom, which in itself, contributes to many of the negative behaviours youth engage in. Sport also provides structure to young people's lives. The discipline, teamwork, creativity and goal-setting involved has ancillary benefits that can spill over into other aspects of a young person's life. We accept, however, on the evidence, that there is severe lack of affordable recreation available to Aboriginal youth in urban areas. Sustained efforts to make sport and recreational facilities widely available must be made in order to lessen the continued vulnerability of growing numbers of Aboriginal youth to social and physical dysfunction.

The relationship between the availability of recreational activities and diversion from anti-social behaviour is difficult to dispute. The lack of anything constructive to do can result in life-long patterns of destructive behaviour. One witness who spoke at our hearings in Vancouver described for us the effect the absence of recreational activities had on youth in her community:

> Our young kids, the little pre-teens and the teenagers would jump off the school bus, pick up a smoke, a hit of some kind of dope or hang on the streets and get into trouble. There was nothing reaching them and occupying them in a constructive, positive way.(106)

The lack of adequate recreation facilities creates pressures for youth to engage in more harmful behaviours, such as alcohol and substance abuse, as ways to escape the crushing boredom.

> Our youth are bored. This may seem like a common issue, not just among Aboriginal youth, but youth in general. There is one difference however. Aboriginal youth do not have the same opportunities as their non-Aboriginal counterparts. They are faced with high rates of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, violence, health problems, abuse, family violence, sexual exploitation, and the list goes on. Add to this boredom and the results are disastrous – suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, incarceration, and the continued intergeneration cycle of violence.(107)

According to witnesses, sport is an effective and positive means to assist at-risk youth. While the sporting activity is the draw, many of the programs we learned about are developed in such a way as to provide related benefits to its young participants. Criteria for participation often include life skills training, leadership development, academic tutoring and requirements that young people attend school regularly. In this way, sport and recreation programming is designed to support a wide-range of healthy behaviours among youth while building their capacity in other areas.

There are many excellent examples of programs that use sport, art and recreation as a means to open up greater opportunities for youth. We were especially impressed with the work being done by the Manitoba Sport and Recreation Council Inc. in assisting inner-city Winnipeg youth participate in a sports camp through its Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre program. Youth from inner-city schools are recruited by Aboriginal coordinators and given a unique opportunity to participate in a sports camp – an opportunity that would normally be out of reach for many. For about seven weeks throughout the summer, approximately 1,000 young people are provided daily meals and a chance to be exposed to, and participate in, a range of recreational activities, within a culturally sensitive environment.

(106) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Gail Sparrow, Musqueam First Nation.

(107) New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, *Submission*.

The arts also provide youth with positive outlets. Theatre, music, story-telling, dance all provide youth with positive modes of expression. In their appearance before the Committee, Ms. Laura Milliken and Ms. Jennifer Podemski of Big Soul Productions told members that the arts, quite literally, saved their lives. That message was heard consistently from youth:

> I am a Métis dancer; that is what kept me out of trouble. Even when I did get into addiction issues or trouble with the law, I always had my dancing to go to. It brought me to Ottawa a lot of times, and I think coming here has changed my life a lot. I think what we need are more recreational programs out there for youth, whether they be cultural or sports-related. They need something to be proud of themselves, and I think we need to encourage that.(108)

We heard of several programs that use the arts as a vehicle to foster self-esteem, social interaction and life-skill training. One such example is the Métis Cultural Dance Society that gives young Métis people the opportunity to learn Métis traditional dance, culture and fiddling.

BEST PRACTICE

The "Awareness Through Art" is a holistic program, offered by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, which targets "youth-in-transition" and youth seeking to make positive changes in their lives.

The program uses theatre and other artistic mediums to open youth up through positive risk taking, reintegrate them into the Aboriginal community of Toronto, expose them to peer support and elders, and build self-esteem.

Through participation in the program, relationships are fostered and youth are provided – many for the first time – with a strong sense of community and their role in the community.

Individuals are not the only beneficiaries of making recreational activities widely available. Sport, art and recreation can also be instrumental in bringing together entire communities. We have heard much about the devastating and inter-generational effects that residential schools have had, and continue to have, upon families. This deep legacy of colonialism, which includes sexual and physical abuse, has made it difficult to maintain health

(108) *Proceedings*, 11 February 2003, Mr. John Potskin.

and cohesion in Aboriginal families.[109] The result is that many Aboriginal homes and communities suffer a deep disconnection from one another. Parents are often absent and youth neglected.

In evidence to the Committee, we were told that sport and recreational activities have had a restorative effect upon their communities. The Night Hoops basketball program, for example, was designed in response to a need identified by the community to try to connect youth to the community. The results were impressive:

> We have gone from zero participation to full participation. The gym that had been empty on Monday nights is now full with parents watching their kids play basketball. Parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles all came to support the kids. Basketball has become an activity to look forward to … When you go to the centre you see excitement, life, fun and participation. Kids that normally would be on the streets are participating in something productive, something that is good because they are developing both their minds and their bodies. They really benefit from their parents being there to watch them. Their parents are the key people in their lives.[110]

How was a youth basketball program able to accomplish so much? The answer is simple. The program was designed to be highly inclusive. Everyone involved – referees, scorekeepers, timekeepers, concession stand operators – came from the community. Ability to coach or knowledge of the game of basketball was secondary to participation. "There are certainly more highly skilled coaches out there, people with a great deal more knowledge" we were told "but the idea was to build capacity within their own community. Other adult leaders in the community became involved, and to me the most important role they played were cheerleaders."[111] The Night Hoops basketball program, and others like it across the country, we believe are protective factor for youth. The sense of community, belonging and empowerment they can engender is critical to their well-being.

Encouraging Aboriginal youth participation in sport requires dedicated funding and support by government. Poverty is often a great barrier in encouraging Aboriginal youth from becoming involved in mainstream sports. Equipment, fees, and transportation costs are often too prohibitive, particularly for the more expensive sports such as hockey. Families simply do not have the financial resources to support their children participating in these programs.

> It is often difficult to encourage a child to think about such a career when poverty is a big issue in his or her life. Some of these children do not even own a bathing suit. Our survey indicated at out of 1000 children surveyed only 10 per cent owned their own sporting equipment. Those figures are discouraging and can open your eyes to some of the pressing issues that these inner city kids are facing.[112]

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(109) *Proceedings*, 30 April 2002, Ms. Gail Valaskakis.

(110) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Ms. Gail Sparrow.

(111) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Misty Thomas, Night Hoops Basketball Program.

(112) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Daryl Bruce, Executive Director, Manitoba Sports and Recreational Council.

BEST PRACTICE

Night Hoops Basketball Program
Musqueam, B.C.

Night Hoops began as a pilot project in January of 1996. As the name implies, it is a late night basketball program for at-risk youth between the ages of 13 and 18. The program was initially considered in response to a large increase in the number of breaches of probation.

The program started out with 12 teams operating out of six facilities in East Vancouver. At its peak, there were over 40 teams playing at close to 30 facilities and involved over 500 Aboriginal teens each week. Approximately 3,000 teens have benefited from the program in the seven years that it operated.

All youth in the program are referred into the program by one of the following sources: probation officers, police officers, school officials or counsellors, youth workers, or any other social service professional.

Once involved in the program, the youth not only receive instruction in basketball, but also a number of educational workshops prior to games that focus on topics such as: job skills, health issues, and personal character development.

The idea behind the program was to make playing basketball with friends more fun than doing virtually anything else that is available late at night on Fridays and Saturdays.

Repeatedly, witnesses told us of the difficulty they had in accessing funding in order to provide sport and arts programming and related supports for Aboriginal youth and children:

> What remains surprising to me with regards to both of these initiatives is the difficulty in accessing funding to support them despite, literally reams of research that says that programs of this type are very good.(113)

(113) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Ms. Misty Thomas.

> Often art, music and theatre are the first things to be cut from our education systems or programs, I am here to tell you the impact it has on our community.(114)

The difficulty in obtaining adequate and sustained funding for this kind of programming is that other areas of high need, such as health, employment, housing and education, tend to receive priority. However, this kind of proactive programming is integral to capturing the talents, abilities, strengths and worth of Aboriginal youth. We are impressed by the testimony heard on this issue and are persuaded that such programs build capacity among youth, connect them in a fun and positive way to their community, and divert them from less attractive pursuits. We, therefore, feel strongly that governments need to make adequate funding available for Aboriginal youth sport, art and recreation programming in urban centres.

Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government, through the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, should establish and fund an Urban Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Initiative. The Initiative should promote sport and recreation programs that are:**
>
> - **Community-based, delivered and designed.**
> - **Sustainable and long-term rather than of limited duration.**
> - **Designed to build the capacity Aboriginal youth through instruction in recreation programming, leadership development and life skill training.**

The Committee recognizes the vital importance of cultural and arts programming for Aboriginal youth living in urban areas. Not only are these types of programs instrumental in building confidence and self-esteem, they help connect youth to their identity, talents and culture. For youth living in cities, the cultural connection and type of expression that comes from participating in art, dance, theatre, and story-telling is of inestimable value to them. Given the particular challenges that Aboriginal youth face in maintaining their culture and identity in urban environments, this Committee further recommends:

Recommended Action

> - **The federal government, through the Minister of Canadian Heritage, should provide dedicated and sustained funding for arts programming targeted specifically to Aboriginal youth in urban areas.**

(114) *Proceedings*, 5 February 2003, Ryan McMahon, Youth Coordinator, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

Finally, we agree completely with the observation made by one witness that the "time has come that the doors should open because the future of our youth is at stake" and that "if we do not provide these programs for our youth today then they will not have a better tomorrow."(115) Thus, we urge the federal government to act immediately in implementing these recommendations.

1.4 Education: Addressing Drop-out Rates

We do not talk in terms of excellence, achievement and success.
When we tell our students to survive, they do.

Professor David Newhouse,
Associate Professor and Chair of Native Studies, Trent University

High rates of truancy and poor academic performance continue to compromise the future of many Aboriginal youth. The 2000 Auditor General's report concluded that "at the current rate of progress, it will take over 20 years for them to reach parity in academic achievement with other Canadians."(116) A report by a federal government taskforce on education declared that First Nations education was in crisis and that the "issue is particularly pressing given that the Aboriginal population is the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada."(117)

Several well-researched studies have examined this issue in far greater depth than we can do justice here. Together, these studies advance a number of crucial reforms aimed at improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal youth. Among the key proposals for reform witnesses presented us, are similar to those contained elsewhere. These include:

- the need to recruit and train more Aboriginal teachers and staff;
- the need to promote culturally-sensitive learning environments, including cross cultural sensitivity training for non-Aboriginal teachers and staff;
- the need for culturally-appropriate curriculum development;
- the need for increased parental involvement;
- raising academic standards to equitable levels;
- the development of urban Aboriginal schools; and
- secondary school supports and guidance for Aboriginal youth.

(115) *Proceedings*, 19 March 2003, Ms. Gail Sparrow.

(116) Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, April 2000, p. 13.

(117) Canada, Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education, *Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*, December 2002.

Sadly, many of these proposed reforms have not been implemented. The result is that a staggering seven out of ten First Nations youth will drop out of school.[118] Those who remain in school tend to have lower levels of educational attainment. Although there has been some nominal improvement in high school graduation rates in recent years,[119] the vast majority of Aboriginal youth face poor educational prospects, and as a result, limited opportunities for the future:

> Education is still a barrier for youth. Our young people are still not finding success in mainstream educational institutions … We know that Aboriginal young people come into school systems in the urban communities who are sometimes two and three years behind in their academic abilities and are therefore already at a disadvantage when they reach our public and Catholic school systems.[120]

In evidence to the Committee, poor school attendance was identified as a serious problem among Aboriginal youth. According to several witnesses, it is especially problematic because of the correlation between truancy and anti-social or self-harming behaviours. When youth are not in school, we were told, they are often engaged in less constructive pursuits:

> We need to look at youth drop out rates. Eight out ten Aboriginal youth drop out of high school. Only two out of ten make it through and get an education. But you need to look at the spin off. If they are not in school, they usually get involved in crime and with other things that lead to that – prostitution, early pregnancy, teen pregnancy. The stats are there to substantiate that we have an overrepresentation in those areas.[121]

There are many complex reasons why youth stop attending school. Some of these reasons include: racism; lack of parental involvement and guidance; resentment and embarrassment caused by feeling less successful scholastically than other students; instability caused by high rates of residential mobility; feelings of isolation caused by being in environments that are not culturally-sensitive; an inability to afford text books, sporting equipment, and excursion fees; an unstable home life; and, poverty.

Consistently, witnesses emphasized that the lack of parental involvement, guidance and support was partly responsible for the fact that Aboriginal youth continue to fare so poorly academically. Many studies on Aboriginal education have stressed the importance of parental and community involvement in the education system as key elements in student success.

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(118) *Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*.

(119) 2001 Census figures, Statistics Canada. 39% had less than high school, compared with 45% in 1996.

(120) *Proceedings*, 1 April 2003, Ms. Anne Lesage.

(121) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Rob Campre, Director, Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee.

The 1996 report of the Sub-Committee on Aboriginal Education[122] found that some of the barriers to parental involvement included the lingering impacts of the residential school system.

The damaging effects of residential schools on Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and languages are now widely recognized. One such effect is that there is a deep mistrust among some Aboriginal people of mainstream educational institutions. The importance of obtaining a good education becomes secondary to what may be perceived as a further assimilative assault on Aboriginal culture, language and traditions. This fundamental mistrust of the education system, according to one witness, is partly responsible for the low value placed on education:

> A lack or absence of good parenting skills often means there is no value placed on education, for itself, and little encouragement for children to do their best. Parents either can't help with school assignments because, the parents, themselves have not completed high school and in many cases, primary school, or, they don't help because they do not appreciate the benefits that can be derived from education.[123]

Another witness observed that adequate parental involvement is a difficult and sensitive issue to address in some Aboriginal communities:

> The Metis community is willing to accept that our parents must do more. Through the process of poverty and colonization that has taken place throughout the past decades, I notice in our students a lack of parental skills and everyday life skills that are needed to survive. Most troubling is that the responsibility that a child succeeds in school is not where it should be.[124]

And finally, we heard from witnesses of the need for measures to promote parental participation:

> There is a need to encourage parents to remain engaged in their teenagers' high school years, as well as participate in the selection and decision making process of career planning.[125]

The scepticism Aboriginal parents feel about the education system is understandable. However, it underlines the importance of reconnecting Aboriginal families to the education system and ensuring that the education system is reflective of Aboriginal families. Learning environments, curricula, teachers and staff must be responsive to the needs of Aboriginal students and their families. **Reforms aimed at accommodating Aboriginal**

(122) House of Commons, Sub-committee on Aboriginal Education of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *Sharing the Knowledge*, Second Session of the Thirty-Fifth Parliament, June 1996.

(123) Taking Pulse, *Submission.*

(124) *Proceedings*, 4 February 2003, Murray Hamilton, Program Coordinator, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

(125) Nova Lawson, *Submission.*

culture in mainstream educational institutions and Aboriginal people in decision-making structures need to be implemented. We feel strongly that governments and school boards have an obligation to ensure that schools offer a culturally appropriate learning environment where children are stimulated and see their schooling and curricula as relevant.

Moreover, we believe a greater effort must be made to educate urban Aboriginal youth, their families and communities about the importance of education, the ways in which higher education will improve the quality of their life, and more importantly, how it can help youth achieve a sense of accomplishment, self-worth and esteem. In conjunction with education reforms aimed at developing culturally appropriate curricula and Aboriginal teacher recruitment, a national strategy is needed to promote the benefits of staying in school and to encourage families to take responsibility for supporting their children to attend school.

In this context, the Committee notes that there have been several successful initiatives to increase Aboriginal parental and community involvement in education decision-making. Among these, we were struck by the results being achieved at Alberta Learning Centre. Established by the Edmonton Catholic School Board, the Centre has developed a range of programs to support Aboriginal students and families as well as bring the Aboriginal perspective in the classroom by providing teacher development.[126] Several regional organizations have also emerged to promote quality education for Aboriginal learners. For example, the First Nations Education Steering Committee in British Columbia works, at the provincial level, to identify and advance First Nation education issues.

The establishment of alternative urban schools such as Ben Calf Robe School and Amiskwaciy Academy are examples of successful innovative measures that support quality education for Aboriginal students. Their academic program is based on the core provincial curriculum, but is enriched by offering option courses that reflect Aboriginal knowledge, traditions and values. Such schools are experiencing great success. In particular, their retention rates, compared to national averages, are striking. Variously, we were told:

- in 2002, Ben Calf Robe School had a retention rate of 93 per cent;[127]

- the retention rate at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) increased from 50 percent four years ago to 70 percent of post-secondary students completing their programs, due in large part to the availability of Aboriginal student support services;[128] and

- due, in part, to the presence of Aboriginal liaison workers, retention rates at mainstream schools, such as St. Francis Xavier High School and St. Joseph's High School in Edmonton are 84 percent and 88 percent respectively.

(126) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Pam Sparklingeyes, Cultural Coordinator, Alberta Learning Centre.

(127) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Sean McGuiness, Principal, Ben Calf Robe School.

(128) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Eva Stang, NAIT.

Essential to their success is an emphasis on inclusiveness and relationship building with students, parents and the community. Such efforts recognize that a students' broader social and economic environment within which education takes place has important effects on their educational outcomes.

Aboriginal students are particular vulnerable to leaving school during crucial academic transition periods. For instance, the transition from junior to senior high and from high school to post-secondary institutions is when, according to evidence presented, many Aboriginal students drop out. Witnesses told us that:

> It is the transition from junior to high school when we lose a number of kids … Grade 9 is the toughest year for our kids. We have more students in grade 9 missing school than probably anywhere else that get involved in criminal activity and other things that distract them from their education.(129)

Other witnesses targeted English literacy levels as a factor:

> A lack of proficiency and comprehension with the English language contributes to individual senses of inadequacy due to a lack of command with the language. Even though English may be spoken in homes, education systems and among youth, this does not mean the command is at a level that will enable youth to excel in academic and similar institutions.(130)

And again:

> We realize that if students are coming into high school with reading levels below grade 10 or grade 9, this is going to severely lessen the chance of being successful or getting through school.(131)

Evidence suggests that the transition is difficult, in part, due to lower educational and literacy levels and the frustration that Aboriginal youth experience in having to "catch up" with the other kids. This frustration is especially true of students who receive instruction on-reserve and come to urban area high schools only to find they are well-behind their counter-parts in schooling. The result is that many youth feel inferior to their peers. Remedial help is therefore necessary if students are to be successful in completing their studies, including initiatives that promote English language literacy skills.

Transition supports, academic planning and counselling, Aboriginal liaison workers, availability of literacy programs, peer support and role models, were measures cited by witnesses as especially effective in helping Aboriginal students stay in school during these critical

(129) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Mr. Sean McGuiness.

(130) Nova Lawson, *Submission.*

(131) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Shirley McNeil, Assistant Principal, Amiskwacix Academy.

periods. Using many of these tools, the Alberta Learning Centre strives to keep children in school and is doing so successfully:

> If you can take them and introduce them to that high school in a safe way by giving them a tour with Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal students that are having success in that high school already, it's all very practical. These all very easy to do, but it makes a difference. We had 100 percent success rate with the last transition program we did in September.(132)

There exists a mutual responsibility to support initiatives that are proving successful in encouraging and supporting the educational progress of Aboriginal youth. Accordingly, we strongly urge all levels of government and policy-makers to look carefully at models such as Amiskwaciy Academy, and support services such as those provided by the Alberta Learning Centre, and apply these best practices on a broader scale.

While we acknowledge these extraordinary achievements, they are, as the Minister's Working Group on Education concluded, "vastly outnumbered by the unresolved education issues that inhibit progress."(133) Thus, the Committee believes that more needs to be done at the federal, provincial and territorial level to reduce poor school attendance and recommends accordingly:

Recommended Action

The federal government, in cooperation with provincial, territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations, develop a strategy to reduce the Aboriginal youth truancy rate in schools.

Such strategies should include those targeting:

- **Aboriginal parents and highlighting to them the benefits of their children's regular and ongoing attendance at school.**
- **Elders, and other community leaders, in the planning and implementation of such strategies on behalf of Aboriginal youth.**
- **Specific measures to address high drop out rates during critical transition periods.**
- **Specific measures to promote Aboriginal culture and history in mainstream educational institutions.**

(132) *Proceedings*, 21 March 2003, Ms. Pam Sparkling Eyes.

(133) *Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*, p. 8.

1.5 Health and Sexuality: Aboriginal Youth Teen Pregnancy

According to witnesses, one of the biggest problems in Aboriginal homes and communities is the lack of qualitative sex education. We heard from several agencies and youth representatives that youth and pre-teens are desperately in need of this type of awareness. In its absence, high rates of Aboriginal teen pregnancy, with many babies being born with health problems and taken into the foster care system, is often the result.

Statistics from Health Canada indicate that teenage pregnancy among First Nations youth in British Columbia, Alberta, the Prairie and Atlantic provinces are up to four times higher than the national average. Incredibly, for young women under 15 years of age, the rate is estimated to be as much as 18 times higher than that of the general teenage population. In a special report on the sexual health of urban Aboriginal youth entitled *Tenuous Connections: Urban Aboriginal Youth Sexual Health and Pregnancy*, the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) found that high rates of teenage pregnancy were also prevalent among urban Aboriginal youth.

High rates of teen pregnancy among young Aboriginal people raise a number of serious social and health-related concerns. As reported by the OFIFC:

> Teen mothers are much more likely to develop complications which lead to medical problems, including death, iron deficiency anemia, pregnancy included hypertension, and maternal toxemia. These factors are closely related tied in with the social situations of the mother. Females over the age of seventeen may be physically ready to have children but the common social disadvantages among pregnant teens of poor nutrition, quality and quantity of pre-natal care, inadequacy of preparation for childbirth, and low quality of post-natal care can result in serious medical problems.[134]

This Committee is also deeply troubled by the high levels of drug and alcohol use as a contributing factor in the sexual practices of youth and in the high incidences of teen pregnancy. The implication is that many Aboriginal youth are engaging in sexual relations when their ability to make the best choice for themselves is materially compromised. The result is that many young women will give birth to children tragically afflicted with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

The effects of FAS/FAE on a child's quality of life are devastating, leaving permanent damage such a severe developmental delays, behavioural problems, learning disabilities, and brain damage. Greater efforts must be undertaken to educate Aboriginal youth on the dangers of alcohol and drug consumption to themselves and their babies.

Existing research suggests that fetal alcohol syndrome is a health issue of great concern among the Aboriginal population. The federal government's current FAS/FAE

(134) OFIFC. Press Release.

Initiative is targeted solely on reserve.[135] As a result, urban Aboriginal service providers must compete with non-Aboriginal programs for funding to the general population.

Due to the great seriousness of this issue in Aboriginal communities, both on reserve and in urban areas, we recommend that:

Recommended Action

- **The federal government, through the Minister of Health, must act to ensure that off-reserve and urban Aboriginal organizations benefit equally from the federal government's FAS/FAE Initiative.**

- **Federal funding allocated for the FAS/FAE Initiative must be increased rather than redirected from reserve communities in order to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal communities.**

Also troubling is that Aboriginal youth report little or no use of contraception, of which pregnancy is but one of several unintended results. This puts youth at risk for a number of sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. While the trend in the reported number of AIDS cases has shown a decline in the general population since 1994, the annual number of Aboriginal AIDS cases has risen dramatically. The age of diagnosis is lower in Aboriginal people than in the non-Aboriginal population. Notably, 26% of all documented AIDS cases among Aboriginal people occur under 30 years of age, and Aboriginal people are being infected as early as their teens.

Apart from these very serious health concerns, the alarming rate of Aboriginal teen pregnancy in urban areas perpetuates a cycle of poverty. Teen pregnancy is often accompanied by early school drop out rates, high rates of unemployment, low levels of education, and increased reliance on social assistance. While statistics on young Aboriginal mothers in urban areas are not extensive, we do know that they experience greater poverty because of their lone parent status, are far more likely to be unemployed, and have high residential mobility rates which suggests continued efforts to improve or adjust housing conditions.

These factors, combined, exert enormous pressures on young children and their mothers. For instance, we know that frequent residential moves can result in a profound instability in a child's development that can adversely affect their educational outcomes. Moreover, the OFIFC reports that:

(135) The federal government maintains that the provision of health care to status Indians is a matter of custom and policy rather than a treaty right. Universal hospital and medical insurance now provides a basis for the delivery of health services to Aboriginal people through the provincial health care systems. The Medical Services Branch of Health Canada provides public health services and non-insured health benefits for First Nations communities and Inuit.

> Children of teen parents have been shown to have lower levels of cognitive and social development. They are more likely to be victims of abuse and neglect and are three times more likely to be incarcerated in their late teens and early twenties than are children of mothers who delay childbearing. Children of teen parents are more likely to have children when they become teens.[136]

The policy implication is that there exists a high level of socio-economic need for these young single mothers, particularly with respect to housing, parenting and child care support, transition from social assistance to employment, education assistance and targeted training initiatives. For Aboriginal youth generally, the promotion of healthy sexual practices is imperative. For some it can mean the difference between life and death.

BEST PRACTICE

The Ma Mawi Chi Iata Centre is a non-profit Aboriginally-controlled organization that that works to provide culturally relevant preventative and support services to Aboriginal children and their families in Winnipeg.

As part of its work in creating healthy choices for youth the Centre runs a program called Positive Adolescent Sexuality Support.

The program has two facilitators that run seven workshops in the Manitoba Youth Centre. The also visit schools that will allow that kind of education where issues of birth control and sexuality are discussed.

They also run a program called "Baby Think It Over Dolls." A youth employment component to the program has been recently added. Two of our facilitators hired 15 youth in the community and trained them to deliver those seven workshops.

We also need to better understand why Aboriginal youth are becoming pregnant and engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviour. In evidence to us, we heard that many Aboriginal youth who are sexually active at a young age report being sexually abused and having many sexual partners. Others suggest that young people become pregnant as a way to stem the loneliness:

> When we look at the issue of teen pregnancy we know there are different reasons why young Aboriginal want to have families. When

(136) Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, *Tenuous Connections.*

> they come into urban centres, it is to replace that sense of belonging that they need. They are looking to restore their own families. They need support; they need a sense of family and a sense of belonging.[137]

We appreciate that for some young parents they will find in their community, in themselves, and in each other the resources necessary to raise a healthy and happy child. We have heard witnesses tell us that teen pregnancy is a value-laden term and we take this into account. All children are indeed gifts from the Creator, to be cherished, and while some are unplanned, certainly we would not suggest they are unwanted. Nevertheless, we believe that unhealthy sexual behaviour and youth pregnancy must be examined and addressed.

Children as young as 11 years of age are engaging in sex. Young girls, yet barely able to care for themselves, are having babies. Their fathers may or may not stay to raise their offspring. Over half of all adolescents report not using condoms, or using them ineffectively. Aboriginal teen pregnancy rates are considerably higher than the national norm and put the health of the mother and child at risk, sexually-transmitted diseases and the number of AIDS related cases are distressingly high in the Aboriginal community, and urgent intervention is necessary.

According to several witnesses, when youth have children they often lack the necessary parenting skills. In his appearance before the committee, Mr. John Kim Bell stressed the importance of nurturing the parent's relationship with the child. He noted that the parenting skills is a key factor in the positive development for any child, but is seriously lacking in Aboriginal communities. "The parents" Mr. Kim Bell told us "do not seem to be able to support and nurture the children … and it is a cycle that we must break." Another witness commented, that we need to:

> Encourage more programs and services for young parents, such as counselling, parental classes, information on programs regarding proper diets for their children and themselves, and how to take care of themselves and their children. As Aboriginal people in residential schools, our parents did not know how to parent us. I think we have to go back and learn how to be parents.[138]

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government, through the Minister of Health, and in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal organizations and youth representatives should:**

(137) *Proceedings*, 1 April 2003, Ms. Anne Lesage.

(138) *Proceedings*, 12 February 2003, Mr. John Potskin.

- **Design and implement a public awareness campaign for Aboriginal youth and pre-teens to address youth sexual health, encourage healthy sexual practices, and the prevention of teen pregnancies.**

- **Support community-based education initiatives for youth and pre-teens on sex, sexuality, pregnancy and parenting.**

- **Dedicate sustained resources for community-based youth programs that promote parenting skills.**

1.6 Exiting Gang Life: The Need for a Safe Place to Go

The kids on the street are trying to find their identity, and they are doing it the wrong way.

Mr. Rob Papin,
Edmonton Native Alliance, Founder

The profound cultural, social and economic "dislocation" many Aboriginal youth experience in cities make them especially vulnerable to antisocial and criminal behaviour. Marginalized and powerless, many Aboriginal youth are left searching for a sense of belonging, community and identity. Gang affiliation and membership can provide Aboriginal youth with a feeling of empowerment, purpose and acceptance.

The sense of "family" and protection from a harsh environment that gangs provide, however misguided, is a powerful attraction to disenfranchised youth.

> With the lack of social cohesion based on common family, community and shared values, many youth develop their own sense of self through the formation of gangs. Aboriginal youth are looking for someone to connect with and a gang of Aboriginal youth provides a safe place. Shared culture, racial experience and other forms of oppression lead them to find a family within the urban centre through the gang. A sense of exclusion based on race and income are common factors that lead to the sustenance of gang culture and activity.(139)

> So much of what we see around us is a kind of dysfunctional Aboriginal world – the Aboriginal gangs, for example, are, in a sense, another way of belonging. They are a formation of community.(140)

(139) *Proceedings*, 4 June 2002, Ms. KukdookaTerri Brown, President, Native Womens Association of Canada.

(140) *Proceedings*, 30 April 2002, Ms. Gail Valaskakis.

In a seminal study by Carol La Prairie, *Seen But Not Heard: Native People in the Inner City*, it was found that Aboriginal groups residing in the inner core of large cities are the most vulnerable to the commission of crime and to criminal justice processing. In troubled, inner-city neighbourhoods, gangs can act as a kind of protection:

> Most young people with whom we work believe that becoming gang-related and in trouble with the law is a matter of survival in the 'hood.' If you are not a "crip" – and in Regina that is someone who is 13-15 years or older, and a "baby crip" is someone up to the age of 12 – and you are not wearing the gang's colours or adhering to the gang's negative direction, harassment and beatings are the result. I have been in meetings where baby crips and crips are scared. First, a principal called a meeting, and that really scared them – gathering at the principal's office. When word got out about the meeting, there was trouble.(141)

Gangs, then, not only provide a sense of belonging, but ironically, a sense of safety. In our discussions with some former gang members, we were told that gangs were often their last refuge: there for them when no one else was. Membership afforded them shelter, food, money and friendship.

It is difficult to estimate how many Aboriginal youth are affiliated with gangs, and whether that affiliation necessarily always involves criminal behaviour. Recent estimates suggest that in Winnipeg approximately 2000 Aboriginal youth are involved in gangs, the largest being the Manitoba Warriors and Indian Posse. In 2003, the Edmonton Aboriginal Youth Gang Task Force reported twelve Aboriginal gangs with more than 400 members are operating in Edmonton.

The issue of gang membership appears to be most acute in the Prairie Provinces. Western cities have the largest concentrations of Aboriginal people and youth, along with the greatest relative disparity in wealth compared to the non-Aboriginal society.(142) The stark social and economic stratification in these cities – that is the degree of disadvantage and disparity – contribute significantly to the presence of Aboriginal gangs. Not surprisingly, then, in eastern cities, where the relative disparity is less pronounced, the emergence of Aboriginal youth gangs has not been as problematic. This suggests that there is a need to explore policy implications for all governments and possible interventions for the most disadvantaged urban Aboriginal youth, particularly in high-risk cities.

The Edmonton taskforce on gangs reported that little support is available by way of intervention and preventative measures:

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(141) *Proceedings*, 12 February 2003, Tom Warner, Executive Director, Regina Native Youth Community Services.

(142) Statistics Canada 2002 report, *Youth in Canada*, indicated that that the largest concentrations of Aboriginal youth are found in the western provinces: 16% in Manitoba; 14% in Saskatchewan; 6% in Alberta; and 5% in British Columbia.

> No agencies are providing services directly related to Aboriginal gangs in terms of any support, referrals, advocacy and programs. There is absolutely no evening support, employment or treatment available. The message we received very strongly and directly from gang members is that there is no way out, no where to hide to feel safe and protected. Therefore they have little choice but to continue in a negative lifestyle … Members live in extremely disadvantageous conditions with little chance of improvement unless a concerted effort is made by all levels of government and community groups to assist in dealing with this very serious matter.(143)

Despite their necessity, community-based prevention, reintegration programs and safe houses are scarce.

BEST PRACTICE

The Circle of Life Thunderbird House has developed a number of programs as a result of recommendations from gang- involved youth. These programs are PAA PII WAK, a safe house for gang members wanting out through Aboriginal traditional methods; "Clean Start," a gang tattoo cover-up/removal project; and, an intervention program designed to address criminal thinking and behaviours.

Troy Rupert, Winnipeg Native Alliance

Research also indicates that imprisonment of gang members is ineffective at best, and counter-productive at worst as much of the recruitment occurs in jails. Preventing gang membership in the first place is easier than removing people from the gang once they are in it.(144) Moreover, exiting gang life can be extremely dangerous: One witness told that us that his gang turned on him when he attempted to leave:

> I was stabbed four times. I was wanting out of the gang. That was my own gang that stabbed me, because I wanted out.(145)

(143) Final Report, Edmonton Aboriginal Youth Gang Task Force, March 2003.

(144) As reported by the Solicitor General, youth also join gangs when they are in jail (where gang recruitment is active) for their own safety. When they are released some try to leave the gang, but this is hard to do.

(145) *Proceedings*, 20 March 2003, Edmonton Youth Round Table, Edmonton Winnipeg Native Alliance.

Another witness underscored the related need to provide safe places for youth to go to when exiting gang life:

> When a kid wants to get out of a gang you have got to find him a safe place for awhile so that he can be protected and so that he can go through the proper procedure and get himself out of the gang, and you have to put him in a place where the gang is not going to go and get him.(146)

The Committee is deeply troubled, based on what we heard, that young Aboriginal people wishing to exit gang life may have no place to turn.

Accordingly, we recommend that:

Recommended Action

> **The federal government, in collaboration with provincial and municipal governments, and in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, support the establishment of Safe Houses to assist urban Aboriginal youth exit gang life. Initiatives should be targeted to "high-risk" cities.**

We wish to emphasize that the underlying factors contributing to the presence of gangs and criminal behaviour has much to do with the wide-ranging limitations in the lives of Aboriginal youth. Cultural isolation, racial segregation and the anomie of social structures and supports in many inner-city neighbourhoods must be addressed. Governments must adopt community-development models, providing for safe and secure housing and economic revitalization measures in urban neighbourhoods most at risk for social disintegration.

1.7 Substance and Alcohol Abuse: The Need for Aboriginal Youth Treatment Centres

Drug and alcohol abuse is among the most pressing problems facing Aboriginal youth in urban areas. Studies estimate that Aboriginal youth are at two to six times higher risk for every alcohol-related problem than their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the Canadian population.

The widespread use of solvents and non-beverage alcohol among Aboriginal children and youth were highlighted by the tragic events at Davis Inlet. Statistics reveal that one in five Aboriginal youths has used solvents and one-third of users are under the age of 15. Aboriginal youth aged 15 or over were about 11 times more likely to have ever sniffed solvents or aerosols than the non-Aboriginal respondents and almost twenty-four times more likely than the rest of Canada.

Throughout our hearings, witnesses emphasized the need for measures to assist Aboriginal youth in urban areas deal with substance abuse issues:

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(146) *Proceedings*, 20 March 2003, Edmonton Youth Round Table, Mr. Unternerei, Edmonton Gang Task Force.

> If you are going to consider an action plan for change, you do have to address the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. It is a rapidly growing problem. The number of Metis youth who drink continues to increase, as does the number of those who use marijuana. It is a sad fact that they turn to these substances for a source of comfort that they do not find living in urban centres. The comfort that they seek is just not there for them, and there is no support mechanism in place.(147)

The federal government's National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) successfully supports First Nations and Inuit people and their communities in establishing and operating programs aimed at offsetting high levels of drug, alcohol and solvent abuse among target populations living on reserve.

BEST PRACTICE

Regina Native Youth Treatment Centre

Regina Native Youth Treatment Centre, established in 1982, provides long-term, 24-hour residential programming for Aboriginal youth in conflict between the ages of 11 years and 15 years. The average stay is approximately 12 to 14 months, with some youth staying for two or three years, depending on what their issues are and how long it takes for things to become positive.

The centre addresses all problem areas and provides a safe, nurturing environment for youth. Staff, a majority of whom are Aboriginal, develop treatment plans for each individual focusing on each aspect of a resident's aspirations and difficulties. There is spiritual and cultural input surrounding a strong educational and recreational component. It is run be an all-Aboriginal board with elders who have input in this respect.

Communication with all shareholders in a resident's well-being is ongoing in order to allow residents to progress. The network includes elders, all pertinent social services personnel, teachers, family members and Regina native youth's primary and secondary workers in the community at large. With much patience and repetition, supplemented by support and accountability, change occurs, even for the most needy.

Teaching tolerance – self and general, mutual respect – in a caring environment, coupled with understanding and the responsibility of making a positive choice, allows residents to envision a healthy tomorrow.

(147) *Proceedings*, 23 April 2002, Ms. Jennifer Brown, Chair, Métis National Youth Advisory Council, Métis National Council.

The federal government's National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) is an example of a program now largely controlled by First Nations communities and organizations. The principal objective of the NNADAP is to support First Nations and Inuit people and their communities in establishing and operating programs aimed at arresting and off-setting high levels of alcohol, drug, and solvent abuse among their target populations living on-reserve.

Now in its fifteenth year, the NNADAP includes a network of 54 treatment centres that represent approximately 700 inpatient treatment beds. As well, there are more than 500 alcohol and other drug abuse community based prevention programs with approximately 650 workers now active in community based prevention activities. Fully 96% of the NNADAP resources are managed directly by First Nations through contribution and/or transfer agreements.

Culturally and age appropriate treatment centres targeted to Aboriginal youth with drug and alcohol, related problems are badly needed in urban areas.[148] The federal government's successful *National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program* does not, however, extend to Aboriginal people living in urban centres, including the Métis and non-status Indians.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends:

Recommended Action

- **The federal government should act to extend its National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program to include all Aboriginal youth, irrespective of status, residing in urban areas.**

- **Funding should be allocated for the establishment of urban Aboriginal youth treatment centres where there is a significant Aboriginal population and be located in areas where they can be readily accessed by youth.**

- **Treatment centres and services for youth should be age and culturally appropriate.**

1.8 Employment and Training: Long-term Strategies Required

Urban Aboriginal youth experience high levels of unemployment. According to witnesses, if job opportunities do not expand considerably, the large number of Aboriginal youth entering the labour force over the next decade may pose significant labour market absorption challenges, particularly in the west where Aboriginal youth face a higher risk of unemployment. As mentioned earlier, unemployment levels are particularly high in Regina, Winnipeg, Calgary, Saskatoon and Edmonton.

(148) *Proceedings*, 18 February 2003, Leona Quewezance, Health Promotion Coordinator, All Nations Hope Aboriginal AIDS Network.

> Aboriginal youth are more likely than non-aboriginal youth to report unemployment with worse outcomes, especially in the Western areas. In off-reserve locations, the unemployment rate of Aboriginal youth is about 1.7 times higher. The actual numbers range from about 21 per cent in Calgary to about 42 per cent in Thunder Bay. As you can see, that number is quite high, even in Calgary. The normal unemployment rate in Calgary is around 3 or 4 per cent.(149)

And:

> According to the Statistics Canada Census (1996), unemployment rates among Aboriginal males in Edmonton are 18.8% as compared to 8.9% of the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal females were unemployed at a rate of 20.6% while their non-Aboriginal counterparts were unemployed at a rate of 8.2%.(150)

Regional and gender variations suggest that Aboriginal youth employment initiatives will need to be flexible enough to respond to these differences.

Employment prospects of Aboriginal young people entering the labour market must be improved. The Aboriginal population is growing faster than any other segment of Canadian society and by 2006, it is anticipated there will be a working age population of 920,000.(151) The demographic projections for this group coupled with their socio-economic marginalization from Canadian mainstream society, present serious public policy concerns for governments. Like most other western nations, Canada's population is aging and this has implications for its labour force and economy. Aboriginal youth hold out great promise in being able to meet the demands of Canada's shrinking labour force.

Witnesses identified a number of barriers to employment for Aboriginal youth. These include:

- low levels of education;
- low or inappropriate skill levels;
- high levels of mobility and transience;
- poverty and family dysfunction;
- discrimination; and
- sparse job experience.

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(149) *Proceedings*, 20 November 2001, Phil Jensen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment Programs Branch, Department of Human Resources Development Canada.

(150) Native Counselling Services of Alberta, *Submission*, p. 6.

(151) Taking Pulse, *Submission.*

Governments are starting to recognize the importance of addressing the structural inequities affecting Aboriginal youth employment opportunities. A growing unemployed underclass of Aboriginal youth can have serious social consequences for the cities in which they live.

The federal government has a number of employment programs specifically targeted to Aboriginal youth. Some key federal initiatives include:

- The *Youth Employment Strategy* (YES) is a federal initiative designed to assist youth in making successful transitions to the labour market ($51 million).

- The *Youth Entrepreneurship Program* (YEP) is designed to support Aboriginal youth to become better entrepreneurs.

- The *Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy* (AHRDS) – a five-year $1.6 billion investment (over $300 million a year) designed to increase the employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Under the AHRDS, Human Resources Development Canada enters into partnerships with Aboriginal organizations -or Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA's) – allowing them to design, deliver and implement employment and training programs. The AHRDS sets aside $25 million dollars annually for youth and $30 million is target to urban areas.

According to witnesses, however, the duration of these employment initiatives are too short to be effective. Thus, while youth may obtain some low level of skill training, fundamental barriers to employment continue to go unresolved:

> The barriers to employment were identified by the youth themselves. They thought that the training programs are not long enough to receive the training that is required to achieve permanent employment. Their lack of experience limits their employment opportunities. Again, short-term training programs often do not result in employment opportunities. The high school dropout rates continue to be high, and the competition for training funds is high among urban Aboriginal youth.(152)

The Canadian economy is no longer based solely on commodities and manufacturing. Service and information sector jobs comprise a large part of the labour force. Even traditional entry level jobs such as receptionists, administrative assistants or bank tellers can require significant information and knowledge-management components in the tasks involved; traditional production line manufacturing now require workers to be flexible, adaptive and quick to retrain. All of these elements have to be considered when discussing training and skill sets required by Aboriginal youth to enter and sustain employment in Canada.

To be effective, Aboriginal youth employment strategies will need to focus on strategic and long-term objectives. The structural transformation occurring in most major Canadian cities from industrial to high-tech economies require that governments move beyond band-aid solutions toward meaningful, longer-term employment and training initiatives

(152) *Proceedings*, 19 February 2003, Nancy Martin, Executive Director, Mizwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training.

that can foster stable employment for youth in current labour markets. Training in high tech industries is crucial to bridge the current "digital divide" that separates Aboriginal youth from their counterparts; impeding them from competing in these growing sectors of the economy.

Facilitating and creating partnerships with the private sector are also crucial. Aboriginal youth are woefully underrepresented in Canada's private sector workforce:

> While Aboriginal people who are working are largely employed by band and tribal councils, Aboriginal organizations and the federal and provincial governments, there is evidence to suggest that a variety of barriers exist that handicap Aboriginals in their ability to acquire the skills that will make them serious competitors for secure and stable employment in all sectors of the economy.(153)

BEST PRACTICE

Private Sector Partnerships
Manitoba Hydro: "The Camp Model"

In order to create an awareness of engineering, technology, and trades career opportunities for youth, Manitoba Hydro implemented the first summer day camp program called Building a Circle, Exploring Engineering Technology and Trades. The focus is designed for female Aboriginal youth age 13 to 15 to gain meaningful exposure and participation in those fields. The need for future recruitment for Aboriginal women in historically non-traditional occupations requires initiatives, requires creative initiatives.

It is a four-year, four phase program that mirrors the Aboriginal medicine wheel. The same group of ten youth will return each year in developmental phases to foster their qualities of curiosity, problem solving, team-work, and creativity. Throughout the year relationships with youth and families through yearly gatherings and activities are encouraged.

The program is offered for free, so if any Aboriginal young person would choose to participate in the program, they can do so. It also promotes an awareness in the science and technology fields, as these occupations are not career choice that Aboriginal youth pursue and are at much greater risk for under representation. It develops and fosters a growing relationship with the camp participants along their education pursuits and career paths. Staff participation, role modelling, mentoring and advocacy all provide the necessary social and emotional support and encouragement. It educates and assists not only youth, but also their families in their development and identification of skill competencies and education requirements. It provides tutoring for math and science, and supports during the high school to university transition. The underlying hook that makes this program unique and successful is that it provides realistic employment opportunities during and upon completion of the program for our young Aboriginal girls. The summer program has been an ambitious undertaking and it is a long term investment with long term value and benefits for all stakeholders involved.

In 2001, the report of the Working Group on Aboriginal Participation in the Economy to Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders, *Strengthening Aboriginal Participation in the Economy*, found that engaging the private sector in the development of partnerships to promote Aboriginal participation in the economy was vital. Initiatives such as Winnipeg's *Partners for Careers* which works to connect qualified Aboriginal graduates with Manitoba's employers are meeting with measurable success. The initiative targets young graduates who experience twice the unemployment rate of non-aboriginal graduates. In its fourth year, the program has placed more than 2,500 young people who are graduates into employment.

Current labour markets, as mentioned, demand increased skill levels and education attainment. Long-term, strategic investments in youth employment are therefore critical. In the words of Manitoba's Deputy Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs:

> We need a comprehensive national strategy for Aboriginal education, training, and employment, that addresses the needs of the public sector as well as the private sector, that is the corporations who create the majority of jobs. We need to train our young people, and we need to train them to become full participants in the economy.(154)

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

Recommended Action

- **Federal programs aimed at increasing labour market participation of Aboriginal youth be should be designed to provide long-term, strategic training in accredited programs for youth.**

- **Funding allocated to the youth and urban component of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy should be increased.**

- **The federal government, in collaboration with all principal stakeholders, facilitate forums and initiatives to encourage partnerships between urban Aboriginal youth and the private sector.**

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

The Committee appreciates that many of the difficulties experienced by urban Aboriginal youth arise from a number of complex underlying problems. The symptoms cannot be treated in isolation and must be tackled in a holistic way and integrated with programs that strengthen families. To be lasting, solutions need to be proactive and preventative, rather than only swinging into action once a problem or need becomes acute. And while we acknowledge

(154) *Proceedings*, 17 March 2003, Harvey Bostrum, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Government of Manitoba.

that many urban Aboriginal youth are managing the transition to successful and productive lives as adults, countless others are battling with complex disadvantages. We stress that young Aboriginal people, by all indicators, are a category most "at risk" and deserving of the government's highest priority.

Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommended Action

- **The federal government, under its Urban Aboriginal Strategy, develop and fund specific initiatives for young Aboriginal people on the basis that they are one of the most "at risk" groups.**

- **These initiatives must be designed and developed in collaboration with urban Aboriginal youth.**

On a final note, we believe Aboriginal youth may feel less of a sense of alienation when they are meaningfully involved in providing advice to governments on issues that are of most importance to them. Initiatives, which involve youth in this way, such as the *National Aboriginal Youth Strategy*, as well as youth advisory councils in government planning and decision-making processes, require our full support and encouragement. These measures provide youth with a forum to develop, coordinate and manage their own initiatives. They are also excellent training grounds for the next generation of community leaders.

We are reminded by the plea of one young woman that all Aboriginal youth want is hope. The way forward is best paved by empowering Aboriginal youth to influence the decisions that most affect their lives while giving them the opportunities to engage meaningfully in the wider community and participate in the benefits so many of us take for granted.

This Committee believes the recommended actions we propose form a basis upon which greater opportunities for urban Aboriginal youth will be realized. In order to attain these benefits, however, the sustained commitment of all governments and their respective departments is essential. We note, furthermore, that the implementation of the recommended actions contained in this report involves a number of federal government departments. Members of this Committee wish to follow the progress of the respective departments in the implementation of these recommendations, and we recommend accordingly, that:

Recommended Action

The agencies and departments of the federal government involved in coordinating and implementing the recommended actions contained in this report prepare an annual review of their actions and progress in this regard and table it before this Committee.

PART VI: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Aboriginal youth living in urban areas face major disadvantages in comparison with other Canadian youth when measured against nearly every social and economic indicator. We recognize the magnitude of the task to enable Aboriginal youth to participate as equals in the future of this country and become leaders in their own communities. However large, it is a challenge that we can ill-afford not to meet.

The Committee could not address the full range of urban Aboriginal needs in this one report. However, two critical issues stand out. They are: urban Aboriginal housing needs and unresolved issues surrounding Bill C-31 registrants. We underline the importance of these issues for urban Aboriginal communities and urge the federal government to deal with them as a matter of priority.

That said, we are encouraged by the emergence of a common awareness in government circles of the need and, increasingly, the mechanisms that need to be put in place, to successfully redress these disadvantages. We congratulate the governments that have shown leadership and initiative in addressing the needs of young urban Aboriginal. The Committee notes an increasing willingness among governments to adopt community-based initiatives and rather than imposing solutions or relying on a "one size fits all" approach. We have noted that there is now a greater emphasis on working with Aboriginal organizations in an attempt to provide coordinated support in a holistic way to communities and youth. However, there is much more to be done before services are truly flexible enough to respond in an integrated way to the needs of urban Aboriginal people.

The Committee believes that there is no reason cooperative approaches between governments, in close collaboration with Aboriginal communities, cannot overcome the structural impediments to Aboriginal advancement. We note with concern, however, that the current policy and program landscape is disjointed. In order for governments to clearly identify the needs of Aboriginal people and youth, there must be a clear sense of what programming exists and where there are gaps. Accordingly, the Committee has recommended that a scan of programs be undertaken and a national "clearing house" be established.

The Committee has also found that facilitating partnerships between the private sector, governments and Aboriginal organization is necessary to open up vital job opportunities for urban Aboriginal youth. Without meaningful employment, it is difficult to see how we can break the cycle of poverty, dependence and frustration so many youth experience. We urge governments to take a longer-term approach to employment initiatives so that youth can obtain the qualifications appropriate in meeting the demands of today's labour market.

The Committee was impressed by the work of local Aboriginal organizations and the innovative initiatives they have implemented to help their youth succeed. Many of the potential solutions governments seek to address the challenges in urban Aboriginal communities rest with these dedicated professionals. We must support Aboriginal organizations and agencies,

friendship centres and other community organizations in their efforts to provide services for urban Aboriginal youth. We are particularly grateful to them for sharing with us their knowledge, experience and wisdom. It is our sincere hope that this report reflects their concerns, their challenges as well as their suggestions for moving the agenda forward.

We were especially struck by the quiet determination of the youth we heard from to deal with the issues confronting them. These youth have shown remarkable resilience in overcoming personal and systemic challenges. We have much to learn from their courage and strength. This Committee is confident in their abilities, talents and vision. As policy-makers, it is incumbent upon us to provide them with the opportunities, and encouragement to put their talents into practice. We – all of us – have much to gain in so doing. This report is for them.

APPENDIX I - FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

TITLE (DEPT./AGENCY)	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MODE	ESTIMATED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2000-2001 (IN $000S)
Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (CMHC)	Assists low-income homeowners, who cannot afford adequate or suitable housing, by providing financial assistance to bring their properties up to minimum health and safety levels. It also provides assistance to landlords of affordable housing and owners of rooming houses to pay for repairs to meet minimum health and safety levels. Part of this program is designed to help make housing more accessible to disabled persons.	Funding provided to provincial governments, targeted funding goals for Aboriginal projects.	2,870
Urban Native Non-Profit Housing Program (CMHC)	Benefits Aboriginal households in need of low-cost, adequate and suitable rental housing (assistance goes to Aboriginal-non-profit housing corps. for operation of subsidized rental housing projects; units are owned and operated by urban Aboriginal non-profit housing corps.), i.e., in 1997-1998, 7,700 CMHC units and 3,000 units by provinces/territories for CMHC.	Funding provided to urban Aboriginal housing providers. (Note: this program was discontinued in 1996, however, there are still some ongoing commitments).	N/A
Post-Secondary Education Program (DIAND)	In 1997, the Program provided $1,343,000 to off-reserve Status Indians.	Band Councils determine who receives post-secondary assistance.	1,343
Aboriginal Head Start (HC)	Off-reserve, this is an ongoing program targeted at Aboriginal children (0 to 6 years old) in urban and northern centres.	Funding provided to community-based Aboriginal organizations.	19,045
Non Insured Health Benefits (HC)	Provides health benefits to Status Indians and recognized Inuit regardless of residency.	Funding provided directly to eligible recipients.	130,000 (estimated funding delivered in urban centres)
Community Action Program for Children (HC)	To establish and deliver services that address the development needs of at-risk children between the ages of 0-6 years.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	10,529
Canada Prenatal Nutritional Program (HC)	A comprehensive program designed to provide food supplementation, nutrition counselling, and support education to pregnant women that are most likely to have unhealthy babies.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	2,639
AIDS/HIV Prevention and Community Action Program (HC)	Under the HIV/AIDS strategy, some funding has been targeted to support community projects for Aboriginal specific urban and other non-reserve based initiatives.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	1,350

TITLE (DEPT./AGENCY)	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MODE	ESTIMATED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2000-2001 (IN $000S)
Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (HRD)	Employability initiatives for urban Aboriginal community.	Funding provided to Aboriginal Resource Development Agreement holders.	30,000
Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PW and GS)	Commitment of PW and GS to procure established targets of its purchases from Aboriginal businesses, including those in urban areas.	N/A.	N/A
Aboriginal Corrections Policy Projects (Sol. Gen.)	In 1998-1999, funding supported the following projects: 1) Maison Waseskum an Aboriginal half-way house in Montreal; 2) Native Counselling Services of Alberta to develop corrections-based scripts and training for delivery of their alternative dispute resolution program in Edmonton; 3) Regina Aboriginal Human Services Co-op for community Development leading to a uniformity accepted restorative and integrated approach to released offenders in Regina.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	N/A
Aboriginal Policing (Sol. Gen.)	Funds for partnerships with police, Aboriginal communities and municipal and provincial governments to develop innovative policing strategies in urban centres.		100
[Transfer of correctional services to Aboriginal offenders, through s. 81(3) of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)] (Sol. Gen.)	The Solicitor General established an agreement with the Native Counselling Services of Alberta to utilise the Stan Daniels Healing Centre, in Edmonton, for the transfer of correctional services to Aboriginal offenders, through Section 81(3) of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA). Several more Aboriginal half-way houses are administered in various urban communities across Canada, such as the Spirit of the People Centre in Toronto, and the Circle of Eagles Lodge in Vancouver. These centres address the needs of released federal and provincial offenders. In addition to this, a project was funded with Manitoba Métis Federation, Winnipeg Chapter, for the reintegration of Métis into Winnipeg.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	100

TITLE (DEPT./AGENCY)	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MODE	ESTIMATED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2000-2001 (IN $000S)
Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres Initiative (CH)	Provides 100% funding to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal people to address issues of relevance to urban Aboriginal youth and provide these youth with an opportunity to direct and manage initiatives designed to address problems associated with urban living.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	22,500
Aboriginal Languages Initiative (CH)	To revitalize and maintain Aboriginal languages by increasing the number of speakers and expanding the domains in which Aboriginal languages are spoken both in on and off-reserve communities.		5,720
Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program (CH)	To improve quality of life for Aboriginal people residing in or travelling through urban communities. The program was transferred to the NAFC to administer and manage in March 1996 for 5 years. Out of 114 friendship centres, approximately 99 are funded.	Funding provided to the National Association of Friendship Centres.	14,594
Aboriginal Representative Organization Program (CH)	Provides core funding to three national Aboriginal organizations representing Inuit, non-status Indians Métis people and their 24 regional/territorial affiliate organizations. The program serves urban and off-reserve populations.	Funding provided to National Aboriginal political organizations.	6,287
Aboriginal Womens' Program (CH)	Provides core funding to national Aboriginal womens' organizations representing Métis, First Nations and Inuit women. Program delivery is decentralized to CH regional offices. The program serves urban and off-reserve populations.	Funding provided to National Aboriginal political organizations.	2,245
Aboriginal Justice Strategy (DOJ)	The AJS helps build the foundation of justice system administrated by Aboriginal people. The provincial/territorial government and the federal government, in partnership with aboriginal communities, share the costs of setting up Aboriginal justice programs. The funding is available for diversion programs, justice of the peace courts, and programs that allow for greater community participation in sentencing, mediation and arbitration in civil disputes.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	1,528

TITLE (DEPT./AGENCY)	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MODE	ESTIMATED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2000-2001 (IN $000S)
Crime Prevention – Investment (DOJ)	- Justice Working – A Coordinated Criminal Justice System Response to Domestic Violence in Calgary - Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program: Building a Future Together - Capital Region Action Team on Sexually Exploited Youth (Victoria) - Criminal Victimization of Aboriginal People (Research project – B.C.) - Gwich'in Youth: 6-12 Years – A Culture Based Crime Prevention Project (N.W.T.) - Children Who Witness Violence: Services for Children Under 12 and their Mothers. Outcome and Effectiveness (Ottawa-Carleton) - Women and Children at Risk (Ottawa-Carleton) - Young Offenders and the Law and Order Agenda: Envisioning Alternatives (Man.) - Inhalant and Non-Beverage Alcohol Conference (Man.) - Outreach Support Worker Project (Winnipeg) - Youthquake: Community Organizing Workshops (Man.) - Circles of Healing (video) (Labrador) - Youth and Community Safety Project (N.W.T.) - Vocational Trades Centre (Yellowknife) - Helping Families – Helping Children Part 2 Video (Yellowknife) - Crime Prevention Initiatives (Yellowknife) - First Nations Youth Camp (Ont.) - Lutte contre les agressions sexuelles en milieu autochtone (Que.) - Restorative Justice: Righting the Wrong (Saskatoon and Regina) - 12 Nations Crime Prevention Plan (Saskatchewan) - Child Abuse Prevention: A Means to Prevent Youth Crime in the Yukon Territory (Yukon)	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	1,536

TITLE (DEPT./AGENCY)	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MODE	ESTIMATED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2000-2001 (IN $000S)
Aboriginal Homelessness (HRDC/NSH/PCO)	To direct additional funding within existing federal programs, through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, to better target the needs of Aboriginal people who are homeless by examining a range of supports that address absolute homelessness and the root causes of homelessness.	Funding provided to locally-based organizations.	18,000
Total			**270,386**

APPENDIX II - LIST OF WITNESSES

1st Session, 37th Parliament

DATE	WITNESSES
20 November 2001	**From the Department of Human Resources Development Canada:** - Mr. Phil Jensen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment Programs Branch; - Mr. John Kozij, Director, Aboriginal Strategic Policy, Strategy and Coordination, Strategic Policy; - Mr. Henry Holik, Director, Program Management, National Secretariat on Homelessness; - Mr. Rick Magus, Manager, Aboriginal Affairs, Manitoba Region.
27 November 2001	**From the Privy Council Office:** - Mr. Fred Caron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat; - Ms Susan Anzolin, Officer, Federal Interlocutor for Metis and Non-Status Indians Division.
4 December 2001	**From Statistics Canada:** - Mr. Doug Norris, Director General, Census and Demographic Statistics; - Mr. Andy Siggner, Senior Advisor on Aboriginal Statistics, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division; and - Ms Janet Hagey, Director, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division.
5 December 2001	**From the Department of Canadian Heritage:** - Ms Judith LaRocque, Associate Deputy Minister; - Mr. Norman Moyer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Identity; - Ms Nancy Greenway, Program Officer, Aboriginal Peoples' Program; - Ms Audrey Greyeyes, Program Officer, Aboriginal Peoples' Program.

DATE	WITNESSES
11 December 2001	**From the Department of Justice Canada:** - Ms Frances Pennell, Director, Policy Planning Directorate, Programs Branch; - Ms Catherine Latimer, Senior Counsel, Director General of Youth Justice Policy; - Mr. William F. Pentney, Deputy Head, Aboriginal Affairs Portfolio; - Ms Patricia Begin, Director, Research and Evaluation, National Crime Prevention Centre.
19 February 2002	**From the Office of the Solicitor General of Canada:** - Kristine Burr, Assistant Deputy Solicitor General, Strategic Policy and Programs. **From the Correctional Service Canada (CSC):** - Gina Wilson, Director General, Aboriginal Issues Branch. **From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP):** - Dorothy Ahlgren Franklin, Officer in Charge, National Youth Strategy.
5 March 2002	**From the Department of Health Canada:** - Mr. Scott Broughton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health Branch; - Mr. Claude Rocan, Director General, Centre for Healthy Human Development, Population and Public Health Mr. Branch; - Mr. Keith Conn, Acting Director General, Community Health Programs Directorate, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch; - Ms Wendy Birkinshaw, Senior Policy Analyst, Division of Childhood and Adolescence, Population and Public Health Branch.
6 March 2002	**From the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs:** - Ms Chantal Bernier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector; - Ms Barbara Caverhill, Acting Director, Learning, Employment and Human Development.
13 March 2002	**From Simon Fraser University:** - John Richards, Professor, Business Administration.

DATE	WITNESSES
19 March 2002	**From the Department of Industry Canada:** - Jeff Moore, Executive Director, Aboriginal Business Canada; - Mary Lou Bird, Policy Analyst, Aboriginal Business Canada.
16 April 2002	**From the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples:** - Dwight A. Dorey, National Chief; - Jamie Gallant, Youth and Labour Market Intern.
23 April 2002	**From the Metis National Council:** - Mr. Gerald Morin, President; - Ms Jennifer Brown, Chair, Metis National Youth Advisory Council; - Ms Pauline Huppie, Director, Youth Initiatives, Metis National Youth Advisory Council.
30 April 2002	**From the National Association of Friendship Centres:** - Marie Whattam, Vice-President; - Jaime Koebel, Aboriginal Youth Council; - Alfred Gay, Policy Advisor.
1 May 2002	**From the Aboriginal Healing Foundation:** - Dr. Gail Valaskakis, Director of Research; - Giselle Robelin, Communications Department.
7 May 2002	**From Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami:** - Jose Amaujaq Kusugak, President; - Franco Sheatiapik Buscemi, National Inuit Youth Council.
29 May 2002	**From the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association:** - Ms Veronica Dewar, President; - Mr. Murray Angus, Instructor, Nunavut Sivuniksavut; - Ms June Shappa, Nunavut Sivuniksavut.
4 June 2002	**From the Native Women's Association of Canada:** - Ms Kukdookaa Terri Brown, President; - Ms Marlene Larocque, Executive Director; - Ms Jelena Golic, Youth Intervener.

DATE	WITNESSES
11 June 2002	**From the Assembly of First Nations:** - Matthew Coon Come, National Chief; - Ginger Gosnell, Youth Representative; - Terry Young, Youth Representative; - Jean Larose, Director of Communications.

2nd Session, 37th Parliament

DATE	WITNESSES
3 December 2002	**From Big Soul Productions:** - Laura J. Milliken; - Jennifer Podemski.
10 December 2002	**From Trent University:** - David Newhouse, Associate Professor and Chair, Native Studies.
4 February 2003	**From the Piitoayis Family School:** - Irene LaPierre, Principal. **From the Gabriel Dumont Insitute:** - Murray Hamilton, Program Coordinator.
5 February 2003	**From the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto:** - Robert Adams, Executive Director; - Arlen Dumas, Youth Program Manager; - Ryan McMahon, Youth Coordinator. **From the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre:** - Lyndon Linklater, Chairman of the Board. **From the Aboriginal Youth Leadership Development Program:** - Leonzo Barreno, Director. **From the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College:** - Wes Stevenson, Vice President, Administration; - Beatrice Lavallée, Elder.
11 February 2003	**From the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation:** - John Kim Bell, Founder and President.
12 February 2003	**From the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth:** - Jonathan Potskin, Director. **From the Regina Native Youth Community Services:** - Tom Warner, Executive Director. **From the Calgary Urban Indian Youth Centre:** - Chief Patricia Waite, Advisor.

DATE	WITNESSES
18 February 2003	**From the Native Child and Family Services:** - Ken Richard, Executive Director. **From the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network:** - Randy Jackson, Aboriginal Persons Living with HIV/AIDS Coordination Program. **From the Aboriginal Family Services Centre:** - Delora Parisian, Executive Director. **From the Aboriginal Resource Centre:** - Connie Boisvert, Director. **From All Nations Hope Aboriginal AIDS Network:** - Leona Quewezance, Health Promotion Coordinator.
19 February 2003	**From the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle:** - Steve Williams, President. **From the Assembly of First Nations Chief's Committee on Human Resources:** - Chief Blaine Commandant, Ontario Representative. **From the Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training:** - Nancy Martin, Executive Director.
25 February 2003	**From the Government of Saskatchewan:** - Brent Cotter, Q.C., Deputy Minister, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs.
26 February 2003	**From the National Native Sports Program:** - Warren Crowchild, Founder.
17 March 2003	**From the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs:** - Grand Chief Dennis White Bird; - Kathleen McKay, AMC Youth Advisory Council; - Jason Whitford, Regional Youth Coordinator. **From the Government of Manitoba:** - Harvey Bostrom, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. **From the Anokiiwin Group:** - Elaine Cowan, President.

DATE	WITNESSES
	From Manitoba Hydro: - Giselle Campbell, Employment Equity Advisor. **From the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce:** - Crystal Laborero, Director, Aboriginal Employment Initiative. **From the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development:** - Marileen McCormick, President. **From the Urban Aboriginal Education Coalition:** - Leslie Spillett, Chair. **From the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre:** - Diane Redsky, Director of Programs. **From the Circle of Life Thunderbird House:** - Troy Rupert. **From the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Council:** - Darryl Bruce, Executive Director. **From the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg:** - Bill Shead, Chair.
19 March 2003	**From the Vancouver Police and Native Liaison Society:** - Mr. Morris Bates, Specialized Victim Assistance Worker. **From the B.C. Women's Health Centre:** - Ms. Angie Todd-Dennis; - Ms. Rita Barnes. **From the Eslha7an Learning Centre:** - Gloria Nahanee, Youth Services Provider. **From the First Nations Education Steering Committee:** - Christa Williams, Executive Director; - Jan Haugan. **From the Pacific Sport National Sport Centre:** - Misty Thomas, Night Hoops; - Gail Sparrow, Musqueam First Nation. **From the Urban Native Youth Association:** - Jerry Adams.

DATE	WITNESSES
	From the Aboriginal Sports and Development Centre: - Frazer Smith, Chairman.
21 March 2003	**From Edmonton Catholic Schools:** - Sonja Willier, Language Arts Facilitator, Aboriginal Learning Centre; - Pam Sparklingeyes, Cultural Coordinator, Aboriginal Learning Centre. **From the Ben Calf Robe School:** - Sean McGuiness, Principal. **From the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology:** - Eva Stang, Aboriginal Liaison Coordinator. **From the Amiskwaciy Academy:** - Shirly McNeill, Assistant Vice-Principal; - Theresa Cardinal, Student Services. **From the University of Alberta:** - Lewis Cardinal, Director of Native Student Services; - Brenda Jones-Smith, Coordinator. **From the Edmonton Public Schools:** - Donna Leask, Supervisor, Aboriginal Education. **From Sacred Heart Church:** - Reverend James L. Holland, O.M.I. **From the Edmonton Catholic Schools:** - Heather Jacobson, Social Worker, Aboriginal Learning Centre. **From the Aboriginal Justice Initiatives Unit:** - Bronwyn Shoush., Director. **From the City of Edmonton:** - Lewis Cardinal, Chair, Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee; - Debbie Coulter, Member, Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee; - Rob Campre, Member, Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee. **From the Edmonton Metis Cultural Dance Society:** - Lyle Donald, Coordinator.

DATE	WITNESSES
26 March 2003	**From the Native Alliance of Quebec:** - Mr. Pierre Nolet, President (Region 3). **From the Centre for Native Education, Concordia University:** - Ms. Manon Tremblay, Coordinator. **From the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal:** - Mr. Eric Ravenelle, Secretary, Board of Directors.
1 April 2003	**From the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre:** - Ms. Anne Lesage, Executive Director **(by video-conference)**. **From the Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education and Training Institute:** - Ms. Ruth Baxter, Executive Director **(by video-conference)**.
2 April 2003	**From the New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council:** - Chief Betty Ann Lavallée, C.D.; - Ms. Stephanie Bolger, Youth Representative.
17 June 2003	**From the Canada West Foundation:** - Mr. Calvin Hanselmann, Senior Policy Analyst.

APPENDIX III - OTHER WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Aboriginal Youth and Family Well-Being and Education Society, February 2003.

Manitoba Indian Education Association Inc. (Recommendations from Manitoba Indian Education Association on Issues Affecting Urban Aboriginal Youth in Canada), June 2003.

Native Counselling Services of Alberta, April 2003.

Nova Lawson, Lakehead University, May 2003.