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## Urban Perspectives

We continue as two worlds, the Indians and the other city-people; we/they. We are frightened and suspicious of one another...[F]ew human movements so confront our history; so confront our private fears and stereotypes; so confront our myths; and so leave us confused and paralyzed.<sup>1</sup>

There is a strong, sometimes racist, perception that being Aboriginal and being urban are mutually exclusive.<sup>2</sup>

**MANY CANADIANS THINK** of Aboriginal people as living on reserves or at least in rural areas. This perception is deeply rooted and persistently reinforced. Yet almost half of Aboriginal people in Canada live in cities and towns. As many Aboriginal people live in Winnipeg as in the entire Northwest Territories. Before the Commission began its work, however, little attention had been given to identifying and meeting the needs, interests and aspirations of urban Aboriginal people. Little thought had been given to improving their circumstances, even though their lives were often desperate, and relations between Aboriginal people and the remainder of the urban population were fragile, if not hostile.

The information and policy vacuum can be traced at least in part to long-standing ideas in non-Aboriginal culture about where Aboriginal people ‘belong’. There is a history in Canada of putting Aboriginal people ‘in their place’ on reserves and in rural communities. Aboriginal cultures and mores have been perceived as incompatible with the demands of industrialized urban society.<sup>3</sup> This leads all too easily to the assumption that Aboriginal people living in urban areas must deny their culture and heritage in order to succeed — that they must assimilate into this other world. The corollary is that once Aboriginal people migrate to urban areas, their identity as Aboriginal people becomes irrelevant.

Research undertaken for the Commission, however, contradicts the idea that Aboriginal people consider their cultures and traditions irrelevant to urban life. They emphasize that to cope in the urban milieu, support for enhancing and maintaining their culture and identity is essential. Whenever that support is absent, the urban experience is profoundly unhappy for Aboriginal people.

Item 6 of the Commission’s terms of reference, “The constitutional and legal position of the Métis and off-reserve Indians”, states that we may “examine legislative jurisdictions

concerning the Métis and non-status Indians, and investigate the economic base of, and the provision of government services to, these people and to off-reserve Indians”.

Many Aboriginal people made submissions to the Commission on urban issues. Critical issues included the challenges to their cultural identity, exclusion from opportunities for self-determination, discrimination, and the difficulty of finding culturally appropriate services. As one intervener told us:

Urban Aboriginal residents are tired and cynical. They have been pushed first by white-skinned and now by brown-skinned leaders. Such residents show their resistance by not showing up in numbers to political events. This allows the return of...elite leaders. Overall, urban Aboriginal people are not empowered to the point where they can govern themselves or hold their leaders accountable.

What worked for our ancestors may not work today. Harsh realities for the urban Aboriginal underclass such as drug addiction and enforced unemployment are not like the harsh realities of weather and poor trapping.<sup>4</sup>

Through four rounds of public hearings, Commissioners received 322 submissions on topics of concern to urban Aboriginal people. Briefs, research papers and policy papers were received from nearly 30 organizations with a significant interest in urban issues. In June 1992 we held a national round table on urban issues. We also commissioned studies on self-government, institutional and economic development, cultural identity, housing and Aboriginal youth in the urban context.

Aboriginal people living in urban areas number about 320,000, or 45 per cent of the total Aboriginal population. By the year 2016, they will number about 455,000. A comprehensive demographic and socio-economic profile of urban Aboriginal people is presented later in this chapter. Some features stand out.

Historically, Aboriginal women have significantly outnumbered Aboriginal men in urban areas and continue to do so, having dominated recent migration into urban areas. Urban Aboriginal people are considerably younger than the urban population in general. They are also generally less well educated: only four per cent hold a university degree, compared to 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal urban residents.

Aboriginal people in urban areas are also economically disadvantaged relative to their non-Aboriginal neighbours. Although labour force participation rates for urban Aboriginal residents approach those of other Canadians, their unemployment rate is two and a half times greater. Those working for 40 or more weeks a year had average incomes more than 36 per cent lower than non-Aboriginal people in the same circumstances. Average annual income from all sources for Aboriginal people in urban areas lagged 33 per cent behind that of non-Aboriginal residents.

The incidence of poverty is high. In Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon, the 1991 census found that more than 60 per cent of Aboriginal households were below the low income

cut-off — the poverty line defined by Statistics Canada.<sup>5</sup> For single-parent households headed by women, the situation was disastrous — between 80 and 90 per cent were below the line. Moreover, the situation was almost as bad in nearly every major city in Canada.

This chapter focuses on the situation of Aboriginal people living in Canada's urban areas and the issues the Commission was told are most critical. We have been guided in our work by the goal of making urban environments places where Aboriginal people can experience a satisfying quality of life, both in their dealings with the non-Aboriginal community and in affirming Aboriginal cultures and rights. We believe that this will lead to healthier, more vibrant cities and towns for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike.

## **1. Cultural Identity**

Throughout the Commission's hearings, Aboriginal people stressed the fundamental importance of retaining and enhancing their cultural identity while living in urban areas. Aboriginal identity lies at the heart of Aboriginal peoples' existence; maintaining that identity is an essential and self-validating pursuit for Aboriginal people in cities. Commissioners heard that there is a strong trend toward reacquisition of cultural identity throughout the Canadian Aboriginal population. Contemporary urban Aboriginal people, in particular, are more positive about their Aboriginal identity today than at any time in the past.<sup>6</sup>

The Commission undertook a major research study to examine cultural identity as experienced by Aboriginal people living in urban settings. The study involved a series of 10 two-day learning circles (discussion or focus groups) held in six cities across Canada. A total of 114 participants attended from all Aboriginal groups, including Métis, Inuit and First Nations. Participants included artists, youth, inmates, and elders, both women and men.<sup>7</sup> The project's purpose was to understand the essential elements of cultural identity and the factors that strengthen and enhance it in urban areas (together with those that diminish or extinguish it), and to pinpoint the events and experiences that define cultural identity in individual lives.

Participants indicated that their Aboriginal cultural identity is of paramount importance to them. Many had experienced identity confusion but had been able, over time, to build a more positive identity for themselves. Others continued to carry a heavy burden of pain and self-doubt that undermines their cultural identity.

Constant interaction with non-Aboriginal society in the urban environment presents particular challenges to cultural identity. Aboriginal people want to achieve an adequate standard of living and participate in the general life of the dominant society, while at the same time honouring and protecting their own heritage, institutions, values and world view. Sustaining a positive cultural identity is particularly important for Aboriginal people in urban areas because of the negative impact of their often troubled contacts with the institutions of the dominant society. Maintaining identity is more difficult because

many of the sources of traditional Aboriginal culture, including contact with the land, elders, Aboriginal languages and spiritual ceremonies, are not easily accessible.

This chapter focuses on the survival and maintenance of Aboriginal cultural identities in urban society. Since a large percentage of Aboriginal people today live in urban settings, the extent to which they are able to sustain a positive cultural identity will significantly affect the survival of Aboriginal peoples as distinct peoples.

## 1.1 The Essence of Cultural Identity

Most Aboriginal people are raised in an environment characterized by Aboriginal beliefs, values and behaviour. The identity instilled by that upbringing tends to persist. Testimony to the Commission emphasized its resilience, even in the face of intensive contact with urban culture. But the immediate environment necessarily shapes the expression of cultural values. The requirements of survival in the city frequently force Aboriginal people to change their way of life and reshape the way they express their beliefs and values. The resulting adaptations run a complete range, from maintenance of a strong Aboriginal identity based on traditional Aboriginal culture to assimilation into the pervasive non-Aboriginal culture. In integrating themselves into an urban environment, most Aboriginal people fall between these two extremes. Some remain trapped between worlds, unable to find their place in either culture; this often creates tension, alienation and identity confusion. Others successfully adapt to urban life by blending aspects of both cultures and becoming bicultural; they maintain a strong Aboriginal identity into which they integrate elements of non-Aboriginal culture. A small but growing number of Aboriginal people have created positive new identities in response to the challenges and opportunities of urban life. In the words of one presenter:

The fundamental change of the past 20 years has been, I think, the acceptance of both Aboriginal people and mainstream Canadians of the way in which traditional Aboriginal people have viewed themselves and the resultant construction of new identities, not as victims, or as noble savages, or primitive beings but as for example Cree, Ojibwa, Inuit with dignity and knowledge and deserving of respect and a place in contemporary society. The ability to construct an identity for the self, either as an individual or as a collective, lies at the heart of modernity. I now see a group of people who are constructing a positive identity for themselves: who now see themselves as an integral part of and contributors to society around them.

David Newhouse  
Associate Professor, Trent University  
Toronto, Ontario, 3 November 1992'

Understanding another culture is difficult because it requires us to appreciate, without having lived the same experiences, another people's way of comprehending the world. It demands openness and sensitivity. We have to set aside assumptions, beliefs and cultural ethnocentricity in order to try and see the world as others see it. If we are successful, we may be able to perceive how other people, in very different circumstances, conceive of their environment and their place, both physical and spiritual, within it. We may even

achieve an understanding of their shared meanings and ideas, including the intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards that guide them.

For most Canadians, understanding the practice of traditional Aboriginal cultures in cities is particularly difficult because we have been taught to ‘understand’ narrow and inaccurate stereotypes of Aboriginal culture. The images of Aboriginal culture for many people are totem poles, stone carving, pow-wow dancing, canoes, moccasins and feather head-dresses. These are among the images of Aboriginal people that are presented in schools and in popular culture. Viewed this way, culture is no more than a collection of objects and rituals, observed in isolation from their vitality and meaning within a particular cultural context. This view also emphasizes the past and leaves the impression that Aboriginal cultures are static rather than dynamic and contemporary. But the artistic and material aspects of Aboriginal culture, though important, are only a small part of its reality and need to be understood within the larger context of Aboriginal peoples’ world views, belief systems and changing ways of life.

In its broadest sense, culture is everything — tangible and intangible — that people learn and share in coming to terms with their environment. It includes a community’s entire world view, together with the beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions of life that may be reflected in its material objects. It is the community’s common understanding of the everyday world, with its meanings, symbols and standards of conduct, and it is communal acceptance of appropriate behaviour in that world.

So Aboriginal cultural identity is not a single element. It is a complex of features that together shape how a person thinks about herself or himself as an Aboriginal person. It is a contemporary feeling about oneself, a state of emotional and spiritual being, rooted in Aboriginal experiences. In the words of Etah, a 17-year-old Aboriginal youth:

There is something my uncle said, you know, “You’re not a true Indian unless you...follow the culture, then you are an Indian.” It’s not a status thing. It’s not a piece of paper. It’s a spiritual thing, an emotional thing, a mental thing, a physical thing.<sup>8</sup>

Cultural identity is a state of being that involves being wanted, being comfortable, being a part of something bigger than oneself. Among urban Aboriginal people, there are many cultural identities, representing many Aboriginal cultures. One thing urban Aboriginal people from all parts of the country speak of, however, is “the spiritual bond, the common thread” that unites all Aboriginal peoples.<sup>9</sup>

Urban Aboriginal people also consistently identify a number of elements of their respective cultures as an integral part of their cultural identity: spirituality, language, a land base or ancestral territory, elders, traditional values, family and ceremonial life. First and foremost, Aboriginal people speak of their spirituality:

All life is given by the Creator; all aspects of life are spiritual. All of creation is an interrelated whole. The land and all of life are intergenerational. A legacy we leave to our unborn children is a clean and healthy environment. The Creator has given all peoples

their own cultural identity, which we hold as sacred and which will be preserved for all time. The identity of Aboriginal women/people embraces traditional laws and institutions, languages, beliefs, values, oral and written histories.

Evelyn Webster  
Vice-President, Indigenous Women's Collective  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 22 April 1992

Language, itself viewed as a gift of the Creator, is almost universally considered a central part of the experience of identity. Sustaining their Aboriginal cultural identity means, for most urban Aboriginal people, maintaining their Aboriginal language:

To quote Verna Kirkness, language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.

Dawna LeBlanc  
North Shore Tribal Council,  
Anishnabe Language Teachers Association  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 11 June 1992

Cultural identity for urban Aboriginal people is also tied to a land base or ancestral territory. For many, the two concepts are inseparable. As an Inuvialuit living in Inuvik expressed it:

It is on the land that important lessons are learned, lessons that are central to the Inuvialuit world view. It is also on the land that families grow together, where children learn the language and traditions of their ancestors — 'Driving my four dogs'. And it is on the land that people of the Inuvialuit community come together to celebrate and to grieve. Their ancient songs, dances and stories are about their relationship to each other, to the land and animals.<sup>10</sup>

Identification with an ancestral place is important to urban people because of the associated ritual, ceremony and traditions, as well as the people who remain there, the sense of belonging, the bond to an ancestral community, and the accessibility of family, community and elders. Participants in the Quebec learning circle stressed that land is key to the renewal of cultural identity and that relationship with the land and territories — and occupation and use of the land — are essential components of Aboriginal identity.

Elders are essential to cultural identity for urban Aboriginal people. They are seen as forces in urban Aboriginal peoples' lives that enabled them to endure or see beyond the pain and the turmoil they experienced in their families, communities and within themselves regarding their Aboriginal identity.<sup>11</sup> Inuvialuit youth living in Inuvik show a "genuine hunger to listen to the elders' stories in order to learn about themselves and their ancestors".<sup>12</sup> Urban Aboriginal people respect the elders' capacity to remind them of traditional values intrinsic to their cultural identity.

Responsibility, reciprocity, sharing, respect, kindness, honesty and strength were particularly mentioned by urban people as values they associate with their cultural

identity. Urban Aboriginal people believe that these values were practised in traditional communities. They were reinforced by legends, cultural teachings of all kinds, rituals and ceremonies. Family members and individuals in the community instructed children in the importance of maintaining these values in their relationships with the natural and human worlds. For many urban Aboriginal people, these values remain as important to their cultural identity today as at any time. As Commissioners were told in Vancouver:

Today we live in the modern world and we find that a lot of our people who come into the urban setting are unable to live in the modern world without their traditional values.

Nancy van Heest  
Urban Images for First Nations  
Vancouver, British Columbia, 2 June 1993

Family plays a significant role in urban Aboriginal cultural identity. Within the Métis community, for example, family defines who one is:

They [community people] know instantly...your whole biography. They know where you came from, who you are, how you've been raised and who actually did all that...When you go back or if you go to another community they won't ask you so much who you are but who are your parents, your grandparents...that whole identity thing of family. It's a very big thing in the Métis community, because it carries a lot of weight. The respect that is given you is again the family...it's like you're carrying more than just a name, it's a whole history of your family, its accomplishments, respectability, background history....And you can't get away from that. The individuality is completely dismantled at that point.<sup>13</sup>

Family is also regarded as the natural setting for cultural teaching. Although some urban Aboriginal people may no longer have contact with their immediate families, they remember the lessons of grandmothers, aunts or parents. Aboriginal cultures place great emphasis on family life and obligations within the family. Thus, for many urban Aboriginal individuals, the birth of children provides an impetus to reclaim their cultural identity, because they recognize that the obligation to teach their children the lessons of the culture is a key element of that identity.

For many urban Aboriginal people, cultural identity is intimately tied to celebrating the ceremonial life of their culture. Taking part in a pipe ceremony, lighting sweetgrass, dancing in pow-wows, fiddling and jigging, drum dancing, and going through a naming ceremony were identified as significant events through which Aboriginal people internalize the values of their cultures into their identity, reinforcing knowledge of who they are as members of the group and establishing their place in the world of the culture.

## **1.2 Racism**

One of the most difficult aspects of urban life for Aboriginal people is dealing with the personal impact of racism. In the words of an Aboriginal woman living in Saskatoon:

I think the most terrible experience for an Indian person in the urban setting is racism in the community. That diminishes your self-esteem, confidence and everything else. You experience racism every day in the stores and everywhere else on the street. All the other groups discriminate against you.<sup>14</sup>

Commissioners also heard that racism is systemic:

To me, it is clear that the racism so evident in Canada will not be easily eradicated. Elements of racism are intertwined in history, in the history books, in library books. It is found in school curriculum. Elements of racism are found in administration of justice, in law enforcement, and often within church groups. It is little wonder that the First Nations communities are in culture shock, that the youth are so often disoriented.

William Tooshkeniq  
Association of Iroquois & Allied Nations  
Toronto, Ontario, 3 June 1993

Racism is experienced through discrimination, bias, exclusion, stereotypes, lack of support and recognition, negative attitudes, alienation in the workplace and lack of role models in management positions. Racism is exclusion...racism is manifested in many ways. It is unconscious, direct, individual, systemic and institutional.

Louise Chippeway  
Chairperson, Aboriginal Advisory Council  
Roseau River, Manitoba, 8 December 1992

Many presenters and participants in the learning circles felt that acts of racism, prejudice and discrimination directed against them as Aboriginal people had a negative effect on their cultural identification. The development of an individual's identity is a social process guided by interaction with others. It begins with a child's interaction with family members and members of the community. The child adopts the world of those providing care and direction. Even under intense pressure to assimilate, Aboriginal people tend to socialize their children into an Aboriginal identity by teaching them the core values of Aboriginal culture — caring, honesty, sharing and strength. As they grow older, the children become aware that these values reflect a larger Aboriginal belief system and support a particular way of behaving. They realize that these core values are the key to defining who Aboriginal people are and what distinguishes them from others, and seek to maintain those values.

A healthy identity is promoted when others communicate a positive image, validating the individual's view of him- or herself. This reinforces self-image and self-esteem. As individuals extend their participation beyond their primary group and interact with members of the larger society, the image communicated back to them carries important implications for their identity. A Mi'kmaq woman recognized as an elder and leader described what she faced when she moved to Halifax:

When I was growing up there was so much discrimination that you didn't dare mention the word Mi'kmaq. That is why I came to Nova Scotia and never told a soul....I even



changed my name so nobody would know. I can understand my children because I thought they would go through the same thing I did....It would never have happened if it were not for the people saying mean things and discriminating against us....I cried many times because I did this. I felt guilty.<sup>15</sup>

Many Aboriginal people face a contradiction between the image presented to them by their families and Aboriginal communities and the image reflected to them by the dominant society. The stereotypes and negative images attached to them by mainstream society are superimposed on the identity internalized while growing up, often leading to identity confusion and low self-esteem. As one young man from Saskatchewan put it:

I'm a really confused young person....I was confused for a long time, I didn't even know my own strength....I had a lot of anger and a lot of unresolved issues in my life...just feeling like I couldn't go nowhere cause I was ashamed of being Indian....All my life I wanted to be White...because they have the money, they have the nice cars. I thought that was the way they live. Until... every time I tried to be White I'd fall short. Then I would become really frustrated and angry....I used to be ashamed of my people cause I thought... we're all on welfare, we're all in the jail systems — we're oppressed!... You know I couldn't understand it. I was ashamed like that for a long time.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.3 Urbanization

She remembers that she's Native, and is suddenly sad that her identity is defined by her colour....She thinks of her sacred stones in her pocket, and stroking them, she asks for protection as she sees one of her people getting thrown out of the Barry Hotel. Her heart aches as she sees children hanging around the streets. She thinks of her daughter in the next generation, walking down the same street. Will she have to go through the same degradation, humiliation, because of her colour?

Robin Bellamy  
Executive Director, Friendship Inn  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 13 May 1993

Aboriginal people in cities interact closely with members of the larger society. For many migrants, this results in culture shock. The stress of the unwelcoming city, confusion, the experience of racism and the inability to find employment push some into crime. Others are provoked by their relationship with non-Aboriginal society to think about their identity and recognize their difference, their distinctiveness. For some, confronting other cultures engenders pride in their own:

You're not only learning there are differences but you are building your identity on who you are and what you are. And either you turn against your culture and deny that you're Indian and try to assimilate or you can accept that you're Indian and you can still live in the city and...be a stronger person for it.<sup>17</sup>

Urban institutions often conflict with Aboriginal cultural values. The welfare system, for example, has substituted institutional dependency and familial division for reliance on

extended family and community. The Commission was told how non-Aboriginal agencies can strip people of their identity:

Almost all Métis children in the care of non-Aboriginal agencies are in the care of non-Métis families. The children are raised without contact or access to their language and culture. They are raised in a society that devalues their identity as Métis people and they learn to hide and be ashamed of their cultural distinctiveness. Most are forever lost to the Métis Nation.

Yvon Dumont  
President, Manitoba Metis Federation  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 22 April 1992

In the urban schools attended by Aboriginal children, there is little opportunity to learn, study or even play with classmates in Aboriginal languages. Statistics on language loss among the current generation of Aboriginal children attest to the relentless eradication of Aboriginal languages. Curricula seldom include the history of Aboriginal peoples. Urban Aboriginal people comment negatively on their public school experience:

In public schools we could not learn about our heritage, culture or history. Also public schools direct us to take the French language instead of our own languages. We disagree with that because without our languages our identity as Native peoples is at risk of becoming extinct instead of distinct.

Charmane Sheena  
Student, Shackan Band School  
Merritt, British Columbia, 5 November 1992

Urbanization itself can easily undermine a positive cultural identity. The main expression of traditional culture for Inuvialuit, for example, is to work and live on the land. Hunting, fishing, trapping, whaling, harvesting and preparing traditional foods support their culture. We heard first-hand about the devastating cultural impact of urbanization on families and communities during the early 1970s.

Many young Inuvialuit today have never lived on the land. Over the last generation, families settled in towns so children could attend school. This movement disrupted life on the land even before the anti-fur lobby devastated the economy of the fur trade. The oil boom brought high wages and a cash economy. That economy has now disappeared, but families still live in towns and live on the land only on weekends. Young Inuvialuit speak of the boredom of town life and the opportunities and experiences they feel they are missing on the land. Balancing this tension between town life and trips on the land is at the centre of their attempts to define who they are and how they will live their lives.

It is just as difficult for other Aboriginal people to find their cultures reflected in the urban environment. Many speak of the homogenizing effect that results:

In short the experience for many [urban people] is that they pick up pieces of Aboriginal culture wherever they can; at times this includes using cultural elements from other nations that may be more immediately accessible or adapted to their needs.<sup>18</sup>

Métis people are particularly aware of the lack of Métis-specific cultural institutions and agencies in most urban centres. They speak bitterly of attempts to minimize their uniqueness, or to group them into a melting-pot of Aboriginal cultures:

At the moment we are looking at strictly Métis institutions for Métis people. We feel that by agreeing to being lumped in with all other Aboriginal people, we run the chance of losing our identity as an Aboriginal people.

Yvon Dumont  
President, Manitoba Metis Federation  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 22 April 1992

As these concerns illustrate, there are no easy solutions to designing institutions and agencies to serve the discrete needs of different Aboriginal peoples.

## **1.4 Enhancing Cultural Identities in Urban Areas**

The most effective way to catch these problems before they start is through strengthening an individual's identity and awareness of the community that exists in the city.

David Chartrand  
President, National Association of Friendship Centres  
Toronto, Ontario, 26 June 1992

Commissioners heard testimony across Canada that urban Aboriginal people are engaged in a major revitalization of culture. This does not mean turning the clock back, but rather selecting aspects of the old ways and blending them with the new. Presenters reported that many elements of traditional Aboriginal cultures are being renewed. Sun dances, sweat-lodge ceremonies, fasting, potlaches, traditional healing rituals and other spiritual ceremonies are all enjoying a revival. The psychological and spiritual wisdom of elders who kept their teachings alive is being recognized. Elders are being restored to their former place of respect in communities, and Aboriginal people are turning to them for guidance as they search in increasing numbers for a meaningful identity.

For the majority of urban Aboriginal people, the result of cultural revitalization is the development of a bicultural identity. Individuals enjoy an identity firmly rooted in the cultural world of their own people, while also possessing the skills and knowledge required to succeed in non-Aboriginal society. This identity includes the core values learned in the family that have remained resilient. Putting those values into practice in the city requires adapting and developing links with the sources of the culture — the land and spiritual world view. This was expressed by a Saskatoon resident:

I think I've learned to maintain a sense of balance. Because I've adjusted to the European way of doing things in terms of working for money but at the same time maintaining my

heritage. Even though it is difficult because in the urban setting we don't practise a lot of our ceremonial part of our heritage. So my job helps me get back home to do that.<sup>19</sup>

Maintaining cultural identity often requires creating an Aboriginal community in the city. Following three decades of urbanization, development of a strong community still remains largely incomplete. Many urban Aboriginal people are impoverished and unorganized. No coherent or co-ordinated policies to meet their needs are in place, despite the fact that they make up almost half of Canada's Aboriginal population. They have been largely excluded from discussions about self-government and institutional development. Aboriginal people in urban areas have little collective visibility or power. It is clear that they urgently require resources and assistance to support existing organizations and create new institutions to enhance their cultural identity.

A number of Aboriginal organizations are attempting to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in cities, including the strengthening of cultural identity. Winnipeg and Toronto both have more than 40 Aboriginal organizations. Many of these are developing culturally based approaches to their structures and program delivery. Friendship centres have a long history of providing cultural programming and have been the most effective urban resource in this regard. They were singled out by presenters and participants in the learning circles as places where one can "feel good about being Native" and find "support and acceptance".<sup>20</sup> They provide access to social contacts, information and services. Individuals can meet elders and create a "synthetic family"<sup>21</sup> to fulfil the role of an extended family. For many urban Aboriginal people, a friendship centre is the heart of their urban Aboriginal community. (The programs and services offered by friendship centres are discussed later in the chapter in the section on service delivery.)

The Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres is one example of an urban Aboriginal organization that has incorporated traditional culture, through use of the Medicine Wheel, into its management style, board functions and delivery of programs and services. Decisions are reached by consensus rather than majority vote; the federation plays the traditional peacekeeper role of the Bear Clan; elders are involved in all training events; major elders' gatherings are held every few years to provide direction for the organization; meetings are opened and closed in a traditional manner with thanksgiving, greetings and sweetgrass; traditional feasts, socials and spiritual ceremonies are held; and hiring policies emphasize experience, individual characteristics and an understanding of the culture rather than academic or professional qualifications.<sup>22</sup>

The cultural survival schools that exist in a number of major cities are another example of institutions that address the identity needs of urban Aboriginal people. Schools such as the Ben Calfrobe School Society in Edmonton, the Prairie Indian Cultural Survival School in Calgary, Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon and the First Nations School in Toronto are alternatives to the public school system for Aboriginal students. In addition to conventional academic subjects, traditional culture and language are a major part of the curriculum. Aboriginal material is also integrated into academic subjects. For example, Aboriginal authors are studied in English literature courses, First Nations arts and crafts in art courses, Aboriginal knowledge of the land in environmental studies,

traditional Aboriginal games in physical education, and Aboriginal issues in history and social studies. Students also have the opportunity to attend cultural camps run by elders in rural settings. Elders and people who maintain a traditional way of life, as well as parents, are extensively involved in the schools' operation, and the schools are often overseen by parent councils.

A number of Aboriginal child and family service agencies that incorporate cultural considerations in developing and delivering services have been established in cities across Canada. Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, for example, has a service model based on traditional Aboriginal culture and reflecting Aboriginal beliefs. But whether an Aboriginal individual moving to the city finds thriving Aboriginal-controlled institutions and services depends entirely on the city in question. Urban communities offer an uneven checkerboard of programs and services, usually funded on a short-term pilot basis and directed to only a few aspects of Aboriginal life, such as housing and child care.

Urban Aboriginal people know what they need to support their personal and collective cultural development. Many told Commissioners that there is a need for urban institutions that serve as meeting places and resource centres for information and services. They also need greater access to resources — information, people, events and activities — that are culturally significant. Urban cultural education centres, discussed later in this chapter, could be one means of providing access to elders, resource materials and support. They could build links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and foster a vibrant new relationship. Cultural programming and cross-cultural education, two broad areas of activity badly needed in urban areas, could form the basis of a wider mandate for urban cultural education centres.

Urban Aboriginal people also told Commissioners of the critical importance of a strong cultural foundation for the healing of the urban Aboriginal community. Speaking on behalf of Janet Yorke, director of a substance abuse treatment centre, Harold Orton told us,

Throughout our work in addressing family violence we strive to return our people to a time where everyone had a place in the circle and was valued. Recovering our identity will contribute to healing ourselves. Our healing will require us to rediscover who we are. We cannot look outside for our self-image, we need to rededicate ourselves to understanding our traditional ways. In our songs, ceremony, language and relationships lie the instructions and directions for recovery. We must avoid a pan-Indian approach. The issues of violence in our communities are diverse and so are our own cultural ways.

Harold Orton  
Counsellor, Barrie Community Care Centre for Substance Abuse  
Orillia, Ontario, 13 May 1993

The key to the healing process lies in protecting and supporting all the elements that urban Aboriginal people consider an integral part of their cultural identity: spirituality, language, a land base, elders, values and traditions, family and ceremonial life.

It is important that Aboriginal spirituality be recognized and affirmed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions. Ceremonial practices must be given appropriate support in urban centres. This may range from specific exemptions from anti-smoking by-laws and fire regulations, so that sweetgrass can be burned for ceremonial purposes, to recognition of Aboriginal healing ceremonies in hospitals. Land, together with the ritual, ceremony and traditions associated with it, is particularly important to the renewal of cultural identity. Support therefore may mean setting aside a parcel of land in urban areas as a sacred place for the city's Aboriginal population.

Supporting and promoting the use of Aboriginal languages is seen by urban Aboriginal people as critical to their cultural identity. It is now difficult for them to retrieve or reinforce their languages within English- and French-speaking institutions. Children are most vulnerable to the negative effects of the urban experience on Aboriginal languages, and programs to support language must begin with children.

Learning an Aboriginal language is important because language is an essential vehicle for the expression of culture, including core values and beliefs. Language also opens the door to many other facets of the Aboriginal community. It is used in spiritual ceremonies, songs and stories; understanding and speaking the language enriches the experience of these events. A member of the Anishnabe Language Teachers Association stressed the importance of language in her presentation to the Commission:

Languages reflect fundamental differences in culture in ways that specific language groups perceive their world, their family relationships, kinship structure, relationship to other cultures, and to the land. Language impacts on our cultural, educational, social, economic, and political life, therefore language has a direct bearing on how we see ourselves as a people and our role in self-government, on land claims and our claim to a distinct society.

Dawna LeBlanc  
Anishnabe Language Teachers Association  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 11 June 1992

In response to the pressing need to support Aboriginal languages in urban environments, a number of initiatives have begun in cities across Canada. Friendship centres have instituted language classes for adults. Cultural survival schools teach Aboriginal languages as part of their core curriculum. Other avenues are being explored. A presenter from Toronto described the development of an Aboriginal language immersion program in a child care centre as part of an effort to strengthen children's identity and self-esteem:

It was and is the vision of the parents and community members to have a child care centre in this urban setting that helped their children retain their Native languages and cultural identity....In order to realize our goal of full immersion it was necessary to create a team of language specialists who, we are proud to say, are First Nations grandmothers. They deliver a language and cultural program for the children, the staff, and the families that encompasses the emotional, mental, spiritual and physical development of all individuals.

These initiatives should be strengthened and expanded. We therefore recommended in Volume 3, Chapter 5 that school boards and all levels of government support the development of Aboriginal-controlled early-childhood programming delivered in Aboriginal languages.

For a large number of Aboriginal people living in cities, maintaining a connection to the land is critical to their cultural identity. For many, it represents involvement with the source of traditional culture. For others, such as a Saskatoon woman who participated in one of our learning circles, it is simply a feeling of being part of something larger and good:

[W]e went way up north and it was so beautiful just sitting out there in the open...Just being out there, there was a sense of something that comes over you...Just everything that was there, and you seem to relate to everything that was around you — the trees, the rocks, the water and all that. Everyone had a good feeling just being there...whereas in the city you don't have that.<sup>23</sup>

Urbanization among Aboriginal people tends to include frequent returns to their home communities. The continuing links to the community also serve to reinforce family ties and a sense of group cohesion. People return to visit family, attend social events such as weddings, participate in cultural happenings such as pow-wows and feasts, and take part in ceremonies such as sweat lodges.

But not all urban Aboriginal people have the option of visiting or returning to a home community. For an increasing number, the city has become a permanent home, and some have no links to a rural community. The ancestral lands of others may be distant. Yet Aboriginal cultural identity remains, even for these people, very closely tied to a relationship with the land and the environment. Access to land in or near the urban area for spiritual and cultural purposes is extremely important.

Urban Aboriginal youth express a real thirst for knowledge about their culture (see Chapter 4 in this volume). It is youth who are the least well served by current programs to revive and support cultural identity. Yet they are asking for an opportunity to hear the elders. Urban Aboriginal youth need cultural programs that help develop and sustain Aboriginal identity. These could bring youth and elders together in various ways, such as in a teaching-learning environment or in mutually supportive roles where, for example, Aboriginal youth provide services for elders in return for the opportunity to learn about their cultural heritage. Other activities might include Aboriginal games, organized together by urban youth and elders.

In fact, access to elders is generally an important need of urban people. It is elders who speak the language, who know about ritual, spirituality, stories, songs and dances — all fundamental expressions of Aboriginal identity. By sharing their knowledge and

experience, elders play a significant role in strengthening the identity of individuals and the community as a whole. One of many individuals who related how important elders are in their understanding of themselves was Sonny, a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation in British Columbia, now living in Victoria:

At one treatment centre they had elders. They talked about balance...about drinking, how it tore their family apart. I guess that's when I really started to accept me. I became aware of who I am....Another time, they lectured or something...I find out where I come from...like the culture, and some of them said that made them feel good. And I know every time I was at home and they're having ceremonies and the potlatch — I always felt good. Especially the elders that came....<sup>24</sup>

Development of a positive cultural identity for urban Aboriginal people will benefit non-Aboriginal people as well. Non-Aboriginal institutions and agencies should recognize this by taking an active part in supporting and strengthening Aboriginal cultural identities. Urban Aboriginal people singled out education as one of the most significant factors affecting their cultural identity. Their educational experiences in urban centres have had both the most negative and the most positive effects on their cultural identity.

Participants in the urban learning circles recommended a public education program to educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in urban areas about Aboriginal cultures. The program's objective should be to promote greater mutual understanding between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban populations and to help eradicate the ignorance that some urban Aboriginal people say is the root cause of racism and discrimination directed against them. As we were told in Edmonton:

Without knowledge of and access to these cultures and without public understanding of what these cultures are, we will lose our identity. Canadians must be educated....

Denis Tardiff  
Association canadienne-française  
Edmonton, Alberta, 11 June 1992

Supporting Aboriginal cultural identity in urban areas involves concerted efforts on the part of many organizations and institutions: developing curricula that include Aboriginal history, languages, cultural values and spirituality; publishing directories of Aboriginal urban services and networks for the information of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban populations; remedying historical and present-day distortions of Aboriginal identity by presenting authentic portrayals of Aboriginal peoples, cultures and history.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Many urban Aboriginal people see their Aboriginal identity as the core of their existence. They derive substantial self-esteem from being Aboriginal, but they also face difficulties because of isolation from the home community, lack of family support, the constant barrage of non-Aboriginal values and experiences, and the need to deal with non-Aboriginal agencies and institutions with different value bases. While urban Aboriginal



people want Aboriginal-controlled cultural institutions that will foster and reinforce their cultural identities, non-Aboriginal institutions must also become a source of positive support for Aboriginal cultural identities.

Recent years have seen significant efforts to rekindle the flame of Aboriginal cultural identity. Aboriginal culture is being revitalized in cities across Canada. Many urban Aboriginal people are creating bicultural identities for themselves, participating successfully in non-Aboriginal society while developing an identity firmly rooted in Aboriginal culture. They are creating adaptive strategies to cope with a changing environment by choosing alternatives that do not require them to give up their identity and that may contribute to maintaining or reviving their traditional culture.

Aboriginal people believe their presence strengthens the fabric of Canada. Canada's culture is enriched by their cultures. Canada's cities, too, have an obligation to recognize and embrace the cultural identities of urban Aboriginal people and their connections to the cities' historical and contemporary roles. Sustaining positive Aboriginal cultural identities in urban Canada is the responsibility of all Canadians, our governments and our institutions.

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.1**

Aboriginal cultural identity be supported and enhanced in urban areas by

- (a) Aboriginal, municipal, territorial, provincial and federal governments initiating programs to increase opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture in urban communities, including means to increase access to Aboriginal elders;
- (b) municipal governments and institutions and Aboriginal elders co-operating to find ways of facilitating Aboriginal spiritual practices in the urban environment; and
- (c) all governments co-operating to set aside land in urban areas dedicated to Aboriginal cultural and spiritual needs.

## **2. Financing of Social Programs for People off Aboriginal Territory**

We learned from many who testified at the Commission's hearings that wrangling between governments over jurisdiction with regard to Aboriginal people has resulted in inequities in the provision of services to Aboriginal people living on- and off-reserve. Many called this the most critical issue facing urban Aboriginal people. The issue has three facets.

First, urban Aboriginal people do not receive the same level of services and benefits that First Nations people living on-reserve or Inuit living in their communities obtain from the federal government. Many status people who have moved to the city believe they are disadvantaged because they are not eligible to receive all the services to which they had access on-reserve. Métis people have little access to federal programs because the federal government has been unwilling to acknowledge its constitutional responsibility for them.

Second, urban Aboriginal people often have difficulty gaining access to provincial programs available to other residents. Some provincial authorities operate on the principle that the federal government should take responsibility for all status Indians, regardless of where they live. Many individual service providers simply do not know what programs — federal, provincial, territorial or municipal — are available to Aboriginal people.

Third, although urban Aboriginal people are eligible for federal and provincial services and programs that are available to all citizens, they would like access to culturally appropriate programs that would meet their needs more effectively.

Jurisdiction with regard to urban Aboriginal people is confused at best. Intergovernmental and inter-agency squabbling is common. All levels of government and many Aboriginal organizations and service agencies are involved in urban Aboriginal initiatives. All too often the result is uncoordinated and inconsistent service delivery. The frustration of attempting to deliver services while struggling to obtain adequate program funding and deal with fractured jurisdiction is evident in the words of one participant in the Commission's round table on urban issues:

Most of us are always fighting over dollars, to keep our administration going, to house ourselves, and look after our administration costs, whether we're Métis, Treaty, whatever...[W]e give people the runaround now when they come into the city. Well, you're Treaty and you've not been here one year so you go to this place. But, oh no, you've been here a year already so you go to this place. Well, you're Métis, you have to go somewhere else. It's too confusing for people.<sup>25</sup>

This section examines issues surrounding federal and provincial responsibilities for social programs (health, social assistance and education) as these concern Aboriginal people living off-reserve. First, we outline the jurisdiction of federal and provincial governments regarding Aboriginal peoples. We then review federal and provincial roles in the financing of social programs. We also identify some of the repercussions of current restraint efforts, including the Canada health and social transfer. We go on to summarize the Commission's proposals for sharing financial responsibility and examine the provincial role in financing social services to non-reserve Aboriginal people. Finally, we argue that the federal government should continue to be responsible for financing benefits derived from treaty obligations or policy measures benefiting status Indians living off-reserve when these exceed provincial benefits available to all residents.

The federal government currently finances a number of programs for people with Indian status living on-reserve. Some of these also apply to people with Indian status living off-reserve. Many of these programs arise from obligations undertaken in the historical treaties (see Volume 2, Chapter 2). Some of these obligations relate to individuals (post-secondary education, uninsured health benefits); others are clearly collective (the inherent right of self-government). Treaty beneficiaries regard the former and perhaps aspects of the latter not only as treaty rights but as portable rights, that is, as applying regardless of where beneficiaries live. The federal government takes the position that many of these benefits are extended to people with Indian status on the basis of policy rather than treaty right. The Commission's view is that there are strong grounds to believe that, based on the oral exchanges and understandings arrived at during negotiation of the historical treaties, the beneficiaries of at least the numbered treaties should enjoy many of these benefits as a matter of treaty right.

## **2.1 Jurisdiction**

### *Federal role*

Under the Constitution Act, 1867, section 91(24), jurisdiction over “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians” is assigned exclusively to the federal government. This federal jurisdiction applies to persons registered under the Indian Act and, as a result of judicial interpretation, to Inuit.<sup>26</sup> The federal government, however, has continued to resist arguments that Métis people are included within the scope of section 91(24), despite their inclusion in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.<sup>27</sup> The relationship established by the treaties between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown, in addition to the traditional role assumed by the federal government to provide for the housing and education needs of Aboriginal people living on-reserve, has confirmed federal primacy over Aboriginal concerns.

The federal government also asserts that section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867 allows it to exercise jurisdiction over Aboriginal people, but does not require it to take responsibility for them. In other words, the federal government maintains that it can choose to exercise its jurisdiction or not.<sup>28</sup> It has generally taken the position that it is responsible for status Indians living on-reserve. In its view, obligations owed to all other Aboriginal people, including status Indians living permanently off-reserve, are the responsibility of the provinces:

The federal government...believed that its obligations were generally limited to reserve borders. Any federal activities beyond these territorial limits were defined as *ex gratia* and restricted to band members still residing on reserve and those temporarily absent or in the process of changing their domicile. Thus, all expenditures and responsibilities for off-reserve residents (other than for specified time periods, or in the context of specific programs such as post-secondary education, or those with physical or mental handicaps requiring specialized assistance) were left to the provinces.<sup>29</sup>

The federal government, primarily through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), funds a wide range of services for status Indians living on-reserve and some services for Inuit. Other federal departments and agencies, such as Health Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, also fund on-reserve programs. Bands (and in some cases tribal councils or provincial or territorial Aboriginal organizations) may, depending on the size of the reserve and other factors, provide a range of services: education, health, policing, housing, economic development, alcohol rehabilitation, libraries, cultural education centres, daycare, child and family services, justice, senior citizens' programs, recreation, social assistance, counselling, natural resource management, infrastructure development and municipal services. Many programs have been developed and are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner that differs markedly from general non-Aboriginal social service programs. Many bands operate their own schools, for example, exercising administrative and fiscal control. Some have developed innovative Aboriginal language and cultural curricula. Funding for the schools is provided by DIAND on a per-student basis.

A number of culturally based services and programs are available to First Nations people on-reserve and to Inuit in their own communities. DIAND funds a cultural/educational centres program under which more than 70 centres, located mainly on reserves, offer cultural services such as museums, cultural research, elders' programs, curriculum development and cultural events.

A few federally funded programs are available to people with Indian status (whether residing on- or off-reserve) and Inuit. The most important are non-insured health benefits and post-secondary educational assistance. The medical services branch of Health Canada pays for non-insured health benefits, including dental services, eyeglasses, prescription drugs, medical devices and medical transportation. DIAND provides financial support for status Indians and Inuit enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions (see Volume 3, Chapters 3 and 5).

### ***Provincial role***

Section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867 reserves to provincial legislatures the exclusive competence to make laws in relation to a number of matters. The most significant in the present context are public lands, health care and hospitals, social services, municipal institutions and government, property and civil rights, the administration of justice, and education. The relationship between federal jurisdiction over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians" and many aspects of provincial jurisdiction, such as education and health, lies at the root of the confusion over responsibility in urban and off-reserve areas. The federal government's position — that it may choose whether to exercise its jurisdiction — has been a continuing source of conflict with the provinces:

Thus the federal government believes it is legally entitled to say to the provinces: "We're not going to spend money on Aboriginal people any more; it's up to you." Saskatchewan disagrees with that statement of the law. We argue that jurisdiction and responsibility go together. The federal government has the jurisdiction and responsibility to regulate

banking in Canada. Provinces have the jurisdiction and responsibility in relation to matters of a local and private nature. So, too, the federal government has jurisdiction and responsibility in relation to Aboriginal peoples.<sup>30</sup>

Constitutionally, provincial government jurisdiction with regard to Aboriginal people has been confined to non-reserve activities, particularly in instances where people lost their Indian status, or when land was surrendered to the Crown. Symbolically, provincial jurisdiction too often signalled a loss of rights and status for Aboriginal people.

Nevertheless, provincial governments have played a significant role in the lives of Aboriginal people. Provincial laws of general application that do not touch on 'Indianness' apply to Aboriginal people.<sup>31</sup> In addition, section 88 of the Indian Act authorizes the application of provincial laws that affect the status or capacity of Indians so long as they are not inconsistent with treaties or federal law.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, a variety of provincial laws apply to on-reserve activities, including provincial adoption and labour-relations laws.<sup>33</sup> On-reserve Indian people also have access to provincially insured medical services. Between the federal and provincial governments, as former Chief Justice Dickson described it, there is a "fluidity of responsibility across lines of jurisdiction" regarding Aboriginal peoples.<sup>34</sup>

Provincial governments, therefore, play a major role in providing services and programs to Aboriginal people. For the most part, the services and programs are those provided to all citizens of the province, such as education and health and social services. All Aboriginal people, including urban residents, are eligible. For example, income maintenance programs such as general welfare assistance and family benefits are provided to Aboriginal people in the same way as to any provincial resident; the benefits are paid by the province and the cost is shared by the provincial and federal governments (formerly under the Canada Assistance Plan and now under the Canada Health and Social Transfer, which came into effect on 1 April 1996).

In recent years, some provinces have begun to develop and fund Aboriginal-specific services to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in areas such as child and family services, health, justice, recreation, training and natural resource management. Most are directed to people living on reserves and are not available to urban Aboriginal people. The programs and services are administered by bands, tribal councils or provincial and territorial Aboriginal associations and are seen in some cases as part of a move to support self-government. They are generally more limited than comparable federally funded programs.

Provinces have also funded a limited number of Aboriginal-specific programs in urban areas. For example, urban friendship centres receive project money from the provincial government in most provinces (although their core funding is provided by the federal government). Some provinces have recently begun to include urban Aboriginal people in more significant policy and program initiatives. In 1994, the government of Ontario announced the Aboriginal health and wellness strategy — a five-year, \$33-million

program that involves four ministries and includes services for Aboriginal people living both on- and off-reserve.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.2 Fiscal Offloading

Both the federal and provincial governments, however, have occasionally used divided jurisdiction to limit their own responsibility for Aboriginal peoples.<sup>36</sup> For example, the Indian Act is silent regarding the provision of social services to Indian people living on-reserve. Provincial governments traditionally have declined to take financial responsibility for providing social assistance and child welfare services on-reserve. Some of the policy vacuum has been filled by federal-provincial agreements, such as the Indian Welfare Agreement of 1965, under which the federal government agreed to reimburse the Ontario government for about 92 per cent of the cost of delivering certain social services on-reserve. This has hampered devolution of social services to First Nations; provincial devolution has been limited until recently to services that the federal government has agreed to cost-share.<sup>37</sup>

The jurisdictional difficulties in providing social programs have been compounded by provincial reluctance to provide social assistance to Aboriginal people who have lived away from a reserve for less than a year. The federal government has shown a corresponding reluctance to provide support to individuals no longer living on-reserve. Recently, for example, the federal government ceased to provide full reimbursement to provinces for social assistance delivered to status Indians during the first year after they leave a reserve.

The resulting jurisdictional impasse has led to confusion among urban Aboriginal people about responsibility for social services and to their distrust and disillusionment with both levels of government. This has taken the form of profound resistance to devolution of responsibility from the federal to the provincial governments, particularly for treaty entitlements. According to a recent Alberta health ministry report: "First Nations people are afraid that if the province takes on the service responsibilities that they consider to be treaty rights, the Canadian government will be in a stronger position to argue that these health services are not rights".<sup>38</sup> Instead, Aboriginal organizations have called for the expansion of federal responsibility for Aboriginal people living both on- and off-reserve.<sup>39</sup> Federal responsibility under the treaties and jurisdiction under section 91(24), together with provincial reluctance to assume financial responsibility for Aboriginal people, has contributed to Aboriginal people's desire to forestall any transfer of responsibility to provincial governments. Aboriginal people fear that the federal government will attempt to avoid its fiduciary duty and cut costs by transferring responsibility to provincial governments.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, some interveners suggested that the federal government was deliberately encouraging Aboriginal people to move away from reserves in order to reduce its financial obligations.<sup>41</sup>

In its efforts to manage its fiscal position, the federal government has limited the growth of expenditures related to a number of existing Aboriginal programs by capping them. It has also cut funding for some programs and has generally been reluctant to implement

new programs. This has resulted in pressure on the provinces to assume responsibility for some essential programs. In some cases, this pressure has been redirected to municipal governments. In all cases, this development has given rise to considerable tension between the federal government and the provinces.

In Manitoba, for example, the 1992 throne speech stressed the need for more intergovernmental co-operation and noted that all provinces have opposed the “persistent pattern of federal government offloading of costs and responsibilities onto provincial and local governments. Federal offloading has affected virtually the entire range of public services, including training, off-reserve social services and agricultural support”.<sup>42</sup> Offloading has, in turn, been a source of frustration in relations between provincial governments and Aboriginal people. Federal program cuts and reluctance to consider new programs push Aboriginal people to seek financial support from provincial governments, only to be met with the response that the provinces are themselves squeezed by federal reluctance to accept responsibility for Aboriginal people.

The federal government has historically covered all or at least part of the cost of some services (for example, child and family services and general welfare) for status Indians living off-reserve. People applied to the appropriate provincial or municipal agency, which delivered the service and was reimbursed by the federal government, usually through DIAND. The eligibility period was often limited, usually to one year after leaving the reserve. DIAND consistently took the position that funding services for people living off-reserve was a matter of policy, not a treaty right. In fact, application of the policy varied considerably from province to province.

The federal government’s recent termination of full reimbursement of provinces for social assistance payments to off-reserve status Indians has been a particular source of tension between the provinces and the federal government, especially in the west. In Saskatchewan, for example, it has imposed a significant strain on the provincial budget and could adversely affect the development of Aboriginal programs in the future:

Unilateral off-loading by the federal government has already cost Saskatchewan hundreds of millions of dollars. We have been warned to expect the federal government to announce further off-loading of social assistance payments to status Indians during the first year that they move off the reserve. This move would increase social services costs to the province by almost \$20 million annually leaving the province of Saskatchewan with no options or hope for the future, given our reality. Increased costs in one area dictate reductions somewhere else.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of the confusion surrounding jurisdiction, policies have evolved ad hoc, with a great deal of variation between provinces. Most provinces have been reluctant to begin providing services directed specifically to urban Aboriginal people, given their views on the federal government’s responsibilities. Indeed, some provinces have reduced funding for Aboriginal urban programs. Given the evident and serious need, however, all provinces have had to provide some services for Aboriginal people in addition to general programs available to all urban residents.

One example of the vacuum resulting from disputes over jurisdiction is found in Manitoba. Since the 1960s, DIAND had been funding social services provided to off-reserve status Indians in accordance with the terms of the Manitoba Municipalities Act for a 'transition' period of one year after leaving the reserve. To be eligible for services under the act, an individual must have lived in an urban area consecutively for one year and be self-supporting. In practice, many First Nations people never qualified because of frequent migration back and forth between the city and the reserve. A large percentage were also unable to meet the definition of 'self-supporting'. The federal government therefore continued to pay for social services for many individuals for more than one year. In 1991, it announced that it would no longer pay the full cost of social assistance for off-reserve status Indians. The funding arrangement would be replaced by the 50 per cent reimbursement available under the Canada Assistance Plan. The saving was to be reinvested in on-reserve child and family service agencies, mostly outside Manitoba.

When full reimbursement ceased, the province transferred funding responsibility to municipalities. It continued to bill the federal government, without success, and for a period municipalities provided services without full compensation. Municipalities then announced they would stop providing services. For a short time, off-reserve status Indians were denied social assistance. DIAND relented slightly, indicating that it would temporarily reimburse First Nations for assistance provided to off-reserve people who had been refused provincial and municipal assistance. In 1992, Manitoba announced that it would provide full reimbursement for off-reserve status Indians as an interim measure until another arrangement could be worked out among the federal government, the province and First Nations. But no discussions have taken place, and the issue remains unresolved.

Although provincial governments continue to insist that the federal government must assume its full constitutional responsibility for all Aboriginal people under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, it is important to recognize that provincial governments have been major policy players in Aboriginal affairs in the past, especially in urban areas, and do in fact have some financial responsibility for Aboriginal matters. There is a critical need for the federal and provincial governments to clarify their respective legal and fiscal responsibilities.

### **2.3 Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements**

Following the Second World War, economic growth and higher government revenues brought with them an opportunity to develop new social programs to deal with some of the adverse effects of a market economy.<sup>44</sup> As provincial governments expanded health, education, income maintenance, and social services their interactions with Aboriginal people multiplied. The federal government entered the social services field by helping provinces with the cost of post-secondary education, health services and welfare. Although these matters were beyond federal legislative control, the federal government could help shape social policy through use of its spending power.



Aboriginal people experience the social and economic conditions that give rise to a need for social assistance in disproportionate numbers.<sup>45</sup> As many Aboriginal people face barriers to participation in the mainstream economy, for example, they experience a greater incidence of poverty and higher rates of dependency on social services.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, many Aboriginal people contribute productively to economic life, regionally and nationally. As systemic barriers to Aboriginal participation in the economy are removed, dependence on social assistance will diminish and economic productivity increase. Aboriginal individuals' socio-economic fortunes are linked to the fortunes of all provincial and territorial residents. Provincial governments therefore have an incentive to promote the development of Aboriginal residents' health and productivity.

Until recently, the federal government helped finance provincial programs through three major transfer programs: equalization grants, Established Program Financing (EPF) and cost-sharing under the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP).<sup>47</sup>

Equalization grants are unconditional transfers paid to 'have-not' provinces to raise their capacity to deliver public services to a representative provincial standard. Their underlying principle, recognized in section 36 of the Constitution Act, 1982, is "to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation".

EPF cash transfers, payable to all provinces, were equal to the difference between an annually calculated 'entitlement' and the revenue provinces derive from tax transfers. This entitlement, representing a federal share in provincial health and post-secondary education expenditures, has been subject to varying annual adjustments related to population and economic growth. EPF cash transfers were unconditional block grants until 1984. In that year, the Canada Health Act rendered EPF cash transfers conditional on provincial health insurance plans meeting five standards: that they be comprehensive, universal, portable, accessible and publicly administered.<sup>48</sup>

The Canada Assistance Plan was an open-ended cost-sharing program under which the federal government financed 50 per cent of provincial expenditures on welfare allowances and social services provided to persons in need. The enabling federal legislation specified 'need', but left the definition of this criterion to the individual provinces.<sup>49</sup> Interprovincial variations in welfare allowances are substantial: in 1991, for example, the allowance for a single-parent, one-child family in Ontario was 23 per cent higher than that of the second most generous province, British Columbia, and 63 per cent higher than the allowance in New Brunswick.<sup>50</sup>

Since the mid-1980s, fiscal restraint measures have been instituted to slow the annual rate of growth in equalization grants and EPF entitlements. Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta challenged the ability of the federal government to limit payments under CAP. The ensuing court challenge was unsuccessful; the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the principle of parliamentary supremacy — federal-provincial agreements between governments bind governments but not Parliament.<sup>51</sup>

The latest federal initiative affecting intergovernmental transfers will generate further downward pressures. In 1996-97 EPF and CAP are being amalgamated into a single block transfer called the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST).<sup>52</sup> The transfer is bound only by the continuing provisions of the Canada Health Act and does not discriminate based on residency. It will be allocated to provinces in accordance with their combined EPF and CAP allocation in 1995-96. Federal spending on CHST in 1996-97 will be \$3.5 billion less than the amount spent on EPF and CAP in 1995-96. In 1997-98, CHST spending is scheduled to fall by another \$2.5 billion.

## **2.4 The Commission's Proposals**

It is in this climate of fiscal restraint that the Commission proposes clarification of federal and provincial responsibility for financing treaty entitlements and social programs.

We propose that the federal government assume the full cost of establishing self-government for Aboriginal nations on the extended territories that result from treaty negotiations (see Volume 2, Chapter 2), as well as off a land base, including whatever treaty rights are currently in place or arise from those negotiations. This would mean that the cost of existing social programs on reserves or in Inuit communities would continue to be the responsibility of the federal government until the programs were assumed by Aboriginal governments; at that time, the cost would be covered through fiscal arrangements. The federal government would also continue to cover the cost of treaty entitlements for Aboriginal people living off Aboriginal territory where these costs relate to benefits not ordinarily available or in excess of those available to other provincial or territorial residents.

In addition, we propose that the federal government cover the cost of these programs for Métis people living on Métis lands when these are established through treaty negotiations. Once self-government and an appropriate land base have been negotiated with Métis people, financing these services would be the subject of fiscal arrangements similar to those of other Aboriginal nations, including any additional payments to Métis people living off their territory to cover benefits in excess of those available to other provincial residents that had been agreed to in treaty negotiations. (Arrangements for financing self-government are detailed in Volume 2, Chapter 3.)

We recommend that provincial and territorial governments be responsible for financing social services to Aboriginal people living off Aboriginal territory that are ordinarily available to other provincial or territorial residents (such as secondary education and insured health services).

Aboriginal people living on-reserve generally benefit from social services delivered in a more culturally sensitive manner. Not only do Aboriginal people elect to be served by Aboriginal agencies if given the choice, but there are also “encouraging signs that programs delivered by Aboriginal Peoples are more effective in attaining their objectives than are programs designed and delivered by non-Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people”.<sup>53</sup> We propose that the development of culturally appropriate services for

Aboriginal people living off Aboriginal territories where numbers warrant, and the continuing provision of those services, be the responsibility of provincial governments.

We believe the proposed division of responsibility for financing social services for Aboriginal people on and off Aboriginal territories has merit for several reasons. First, this division establishes clear lines of accountability, reinforcing the precepts of democratic government.<sup>54</sup> The governments (whether Aboriginal or provincial) responsible for entitlements or services are accountable to the individuals who are eligible to receive them. As Aboriginal people become financially independent, they will become a source of tax revenue for the government that delivers services to them.

Second, the proposal has the merit of respecting traditional lines of constitutional responsibility. The provinces continue to have financial responsibility for services such as health, welfare and education, assigned to them by the Constitution Act, 1867. While provinces are not entitled constitutionally to legislate in regard to matters affecting Aboriginal or treaty rights, there is nothing to prevent provincial laws that do not “abrogate or qualify treaty rights”<sup>55</sup> or that “preferentially single out Aboriginal persons or institutions” for purposes of affirmative action.<sup>56</sup> The federal government continues to bear responsibility for entitlements that arise out of the treaties over and above services normally provided by provincial governments. These are continuing obligations that have distinguished the federal government’s relationship with Aboriginal peoples from that of most provincial governments.

## **2.5 Rationale for Provincial Role: The Right to Equality of Treatment**

Aboriginal people have expressed concern about provincial governments assuming responsibility for financing social services for Aboriginal people off Aboriginal territory to the level of benefits available to other provincial residents. Some see this as tantamount to a limitation on existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, offending section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Aboriginal people see their relationship with the Crown as being primarily with the Crown in right of Canada.<sup>57</sup> Jurisdiction over “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians” was assigned constitutionally to the federal government. Conceptions about the superior constitutional and fiscal power of the federal government lend support to Aboriginal peoples’ view. At the same time, the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy empowers Parliament to make or unmake any law within its jurisdiction, subject to the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In addition, the doctrine of paramountcy, a principle of Canadian constitutional interpretation, provides that in the event of an operational conflict between federal and provincial laws, the federal law will take precedence.

Judicial interpretation has held that, by virtue of the Constitution Act, 1867, as well as custom and usage, the relationship between the British Crown and Aboriginal peoples in British North America devolved to the Crown in right of Canada and to the Crown in right of the individual provinces.<sup>58</sup> This is because Canada, unlike Great Britain, is a

federation in which Parliament and the provincial legislatures are sovereign only in the areas of jurisdiction assigned to them by the constitution.<sup>59</sup> This has led to many of the jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments that have had such a detrimental effect on Aboriginal peoples. While the federal government has responsibility for First Nations and their lands under section 91(24) and hence is the appropriate party to all treaties with them, the provincial governments have exclusive jurisdiction over areas such as education, health and property, and civil rights within the province. The potential for conflict regarding which level of government should honour obligations to Aboriginal peoples in these areas is thus built into the constitution and must be resolved in a way that represents an equitable sharing of responsibility between governments. However — and this is our paramount concern — the sharing must be done in a way that ensures that all obligations to all Aboriginal people are fully honoured and respected.

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and treaty rights, is binding on both orders of government and requires them to end their jurisdictional wrangling and reach an accommodation regarding how Canada's obligations to Aboriginal people are to be fully and effectively discharged.

As pointed out by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Guerin and Sparrow*, Canada's relationship with Aboriginal peoples is a fiduciary one, trust-like in nature. Both orders of government must act in ways that honour this historical relationship between Canada and Aboriginal peoples.<sup>60</sup>

Provinces cannot discriminate in the treatment of their residents on grounds of personal characteristics that are irrelevant to the nature of the benefit or service being provided. Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the equality section, forbids such discrimination.

This does not mean, however, that services provided to residents can ignore significant cultural differences in the intended recipients. For example, health services delivered to Aboriginal people must reflect a holistic approach to health, and educational curricula and programs should include an Aboriginal perspective on the history of Canada. An obligation to provide services is an obligation to provide them in ways culturally appropriate to those entitled to receive them.

Section 15(2) goes further, however, making it clear that the right to equality addresses more than just the manner in which benefits or services made available to all are to be provided. It also addresses the nature and extent of the services to disadvantaged individuals or groups in order to ameliorate their disadvantage. It authorizes affirmative action programs by specifying that these do not constitute violations of section 15(1). Under section 15(2), it is equality of outcomes that is important. Treating individuals or groups who are already disadvantaged or unequal in the same way as those who are not will not ameliorate the first group's disadvantage; it will build upon and perpetuate it.

The purpose of section 15(2) is remedial. It answers the question, “How does one remedy an existing disadvantage?”, not by providing the same treatment to a disadvantaged group as to others, but by making sure they are treated in a way that removes their disadvantage and brings them to a position of equality with others.

Those opposed to remedying disadvantage in our society call this ‘reverse discrimination’, refusing to acknowledge the clear intent of the charter that remedying existing disadvantage or inequality by affirmative action under section 15(2) does not constitute discrimination for purposes of section 15(1).

The affirmative action exception appears in almost all provincial human rights codes, as well as in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and applies to the provision of benefits and services to Aboriginal people by the federal, provincial and territorial governments and also through provincial governments to municipal governments.<sup>61</sup>

Although provinces are barred under section 88 of the Indian Act from legislating in ways that impair the “status or capacity” of Aboriginal people,<sup>62</sup> they are perfectly free to deliver programs that improve the social conditions of Aboriginal people — as, indeed, they ought to do in the case of manifest disadvantage.<sup>63</sup>

In the Commission’s view, therefore, provinces are obliged to provide services to all their residents, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, without discrimination; this includes making sure that such services are provided in a culturally appropriate manner. In addition, provinces faced with glaring inequalities in the living conditions of their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents should in the interests of equality institute special programs designed to remedy these inequities. Moreover, no distinction should be made in the delivery of services between Aboriginal residents who have recently moved from a reserve and those who have been living off-reserve for some time.

A reasonable division of the financial burden between the federal and provincial governments would be for the federal government to assume the cost of culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people on-reserve and provincial governments to assume their cost for Aboriginal residents in their province, where numbers warrant. The cost of special programs and services for Aboriginal residents required by human rights policy — over and above those ordinarily provided to other provincial residents — should be shared by the federal and provincial governments based on an agreed formula. This would include benefits and services required to remedy the long-standing disadvantage of Aboriginal people and to bring their standard of living up to the level enjoyed by other Canadians.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Wrangling over jurisdiction has impeded urban Aboriginal people’s access to services. Intergovernmental disputes, federal and provincial offloading, lack of program co-ordination, exclusion of municipal governments and urban Aboriginal groups from discussions and negotiations on policy and jurisdictional issues, and confusion regarding

the political representation of Aboriginal people in cities have all contributed to a situation that has had serious adverse effects on the ability of Aboriginal people to gain access to appropriate services in urban centres. Seen in the light of the fiduciary duties owed to Aboriginal people by the federal and provincial Crowns; the obligation of provincial governments to provide services to off-reserve Indian people to achieve equality with other provincial residents; and the federal government's continuing financial role in supplementing, where appropriate, benefits provided by the provinces, interjurisdictional wrangling cannot be allowed to stand in the way of improvements in the social and economic conditions of urban Aboriginal people.

The issues are complex and multi-layered. Ultimately, their successful resolution will depend on the goodwill of all governments to find fair and workable solutions despite fiscal constraints. Aboriginal governments, no less than other governments, will be expected to devise self-government arrangements in this context of economic restructuring and fiscal constraint. It would be preferable for non-Aboriginal governments to adopt an approach to fiscal responsibility that enhances Aboriginal governmental autonomy while at the same time respecting the equal citizenship rights of all Canadians.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.2**

The federal government be responsible for

- (a) the costs associated with developing, implementing and operating Aboriginal self-government initiatives on and off a land base through program funding and fiscal arrangements;
- (b) programs, services and treaty entitlements for Aboriginal people living on reserves or extended Aboriginal territories;
- (c) treaty entitlements or agreed upon social programs such as financial assistance for post-secondary education and uninsured health benefits for Indian people living off-reserve, to the extent that these exceed the programs or services provided to other residents by the province or territory in which they reside; and
- (d) the cost of services for Métis people agreed to in treaty negotiations, once they have achieved self-government and a land base, including additional payments to Métis people living off their land base to cover benefits agreed to by treaty where those exceed benefits normally available to other provincial residents.

### **4.7.3**

Provincial and territorial governments be responsible for

(a) providing and financing the programs and services that are available to residents in general, to all Aboriginal people residing in the province or territory, except those resident on-reserve, in Inuit communities or on extended Aboriginal territory; and

(b) providing programs and services for Aboriginal people that are culturally appropriate where numbers warrant.

Given the economically and socially disadvantaged situation of many Aboriginal people living in urban centres, some programs and services will require enrichment so that Aboriginal people can begin to enjoy the same quality of life as other Canadians. Responsibility for funding these enhancements should be shared between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. (For greater detail, see Volume 2, Chapter 3.)

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.4**

The cost of affirmative action programs and services to address economic and social disadvantage affecting urban Aboriginal people be shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments on the basis of a formula basis that reflects provincial/territorial fiscal capacity.

## **3. Service Delivery**

This section looks at some of the important issues in the delivery of health and social services, education and cultural policy to urban Aboriginal people, from the perspective of both users and providers. Among the services that may play a part in the daily lives of many urban Aboriginal people and families are child and family services, counselling of various types, community health, training and employment, referrals, social assistance, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, and low-cost housing. These services are delivered variously by Aboriginal organizations (either specific to a particular Aboriginal group or 'status-blind') and by non-Aboriginal agencies also serving non-Aboriginal clients. The number, range and nature of these organizations vary considerably from place to place in Canada.

### **3.1 The Current Situation: Issues, Needs and Problems**

In many urban areas, there are significant numbers of programs and services for Aboriginal people delivered by federal, provincial and municipal governments, non-government organizations and Aboriginal agencies. Despite this extensive infrastructure, service delivery is hampered by difficulties and weaknesses. Many Aboriginal people who testified at Commission hearings described services as inadequate, not culturally

relevant and sometimes even hostile. For many, services are not accessible because Aboriginal people cannot afford them or do not qualify. Many services required to make a successful transition to urban centres — or simply to enjoy a quality of life similar to that of non-Aboriginal people — are not available or are in very short supply. Housing is one example: Aboriginal housing corporations in urban areas have waiting lists of 100 or more.<sup>64</sup> As reported by an Ontario task force on urban Aboriginal people as long ago as 1981, respondents' access to housing is limited by the shortage of housing, discrimination by landlords, limited finances, and limited information about housing availability. The situation has not changed substantially since then; shortages of housing are real, and the consequences for Aboriginal people in all parts of the province are painful.<sup>65</sup>

Métis senator Thelma Chalifoux told the Commission of the difficulty that seniors and veterans have obtaining housing and other basic services in urban areas:

There are no homes for our Métis seniors or Indian seniors living off-reserve. There are no services for them. They are totally isolated because the existing services do not have Aboriginal people that could look in on them and counsel them....Our veterans are in the same boat. I visit veterans that live in one little shack, one little room, and they have nothing, and they're too proud to ask.

Senator Thelma Chalifoux  
Metis Nation of Alberta  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 21 April 1992

### **3.2 Cultural Appropriateness**

Many urban services designed for the general population are not culturally relevant to Aboriginal people. As a result, cultural and spiritual needs go largely unmet. Aboriginal people made a strong case for holistic services that recognize and work to heal the whole person. But most social and human services are designed to address specific problems, such as unemployment or child neglect, and as such focus on symptoms rather than the underlying causes. Aboriginal people need and should have culturally appropriate services, designed by Aboriginal people, that promote healing through a holistic approach to individuals and communities.

Many services and programs are delivered by non-Aboriginal people and agencies that lack cultural training and awareness of Aboriginal reality. As a result, they tend to view conditions as isolated problems and to see the individual as being deficient or unable to fit into predetermined categories. Participants in the Commission's round table talks on urban issues described the traumatic consequences of this approach. For example, many Aboriginal women are reluctant to report sexual abuse or to enter substance abuse programs for fear that non-Aboriginal child welfare agencies will take their children away and place them in foster care, almost always in non-Aboriginal homes. As one participant said,

Culturally appropriate counselling and care facilities with trained staff are required to deal with child abuse and incest. It won't work to place survivors in a non-Aboriginal



environment. The whole family needs training, not just the victim. Aboriginal counsellors should be trained, and Aboriginal communities must take control of child and family services.<sup>66</sup>

Programs developed by mainstream service agencies do little to protect and enhance Aboriginal cultural identity because they are not designed to do so. They tend to have a very specific, one-dimensional focus. Their cultural unsuitability flows from the lack of direct Aboriginal involvement in their design, development and delivery. Aboriginal people and organizations are sharply under-utilized in all phases of programming, including monitoring and evaluation.

Some mainstream agencies and municipal governments have begun to realize that they cannot adequately meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people and are turning more frequently to Aboriginal agencies to provide services. But Aboriginal organizations and service agencies are severely underfunded, often operating on an ad hoc or short-term project-funding basis (see detailed examples in Volume 3, Chapter 3).<sup>67</sup> Unstable and fragmented funding arrangements make it impossible to plan and deliver quality services at an adequate level, and programs are often understaffed and overly dependent on unpaid and untrained volunteers. Burn-out of staff and volunteers is a constant problem as well. Administrators spend much of their time and energy seeking funding instead of delivering services.

Government funding for urban Aboriginal services has not kept pace with the growth of the urban Aboriginal population. Although 45 per cent of all Aboriginal people now live in urban areas, funding does not reflect this reality. Federal funding for programs such as the Aboriginal health program apply only to First Nations people living on reserves and Inuit living in their home communities. Aboriginal people living in urban areas are generally ineligible for these programs.

It is obvious that the current delivery system is seriously deficient in meeting the needs of urban Aboriginal people. They are being served by a system that is essentially foreign to them. Clearly, it must change.

### **3.3 Reform**

The delivery of services to urban Aboriginal people must be improved in at least two important ways. First, in urban areas with a sufficiently large Aboriginal population, service delivery by Aboriginal institutions should be promoted by continuing to develop existing institutions and by supporting new initiatives. Second, services provided by non-Aboriginal institutions must be changed to improve access and cultural relevance. In addition, the question of whether service delivery should be 'status-blind' or be provided to each Aboriginal group by a separate institution must be addressed.

#### ***Aboriginal institutions***

In many urban areas with large Aboriginal populations, service agencies and programs have evolved in the past two decades. By the fall of 1993, there were 35 to 40 Aboriginal agencies and organizations in Toronto providing services in education, health, community development and training, child and family services, housing, social services, legal services, and arts and cultural development. In Regina, approximately 25 Aboriginal agencies and non-government organizations were delivering services. As of the spring of 1994, Winnipeg had about 55 such agencies and organizations.

In cities such as Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Edmonton, where Aboriginal residents number in the thousands, the need for and viability of Aboriginally controlled institutions seems clear. In urban centres where Aboriginal people are present in large numbers or make up an important proportion of the overall population, Aboriginal service institutions should be seen as fundamental to service delivery, not as discretionary initiatives. In addition to providing greatly needed services, they are also important vehicles for supporting Aboriginal identity. Moreover, since they are directed and administered by Aboriginal people, service institutions are also working examples of the community of interest model of self-government in urban centres. (See the discussion later in this chapter on governance for Aboriginal people in urban areas and, more generally, Volume 2, Chapter 3.)

In their presentations to the Commission, many Aboriginal people argued for urban Aboriginal service institutions that would, in addition to providing services, help to co-ordinate policy and planning for Aboriginal people in cities and provide a valuable link between reserve- or land-based service agencies and political entities in urban centres:

Some of our recommendations are: the need for a provincial network of Aboriginal service providers established to function as a co-ordinating body for policy and planning; a restructuring of current service delivery institutions such as child welfare services to provide for the development of Aboriginal-controlled institutions that will deliver programming and services to Aboriginal clients; and processes to be established to provide for co-operative working relationships between urban- and reserve-based service agencies and political organizations.

Marilyn Fontaine  
Aboriginal Women's Unity Coalition  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992

A network of service institutions, especially in large urban areas, would promote consistent program delivery by developing and maintaining effective co-ordination with reserve- and rural-based agencies to ensure there are no gaps in the services provided to clients. For Aboriginal people new to urban life, an Aboriginal service agency can often make the difference between a relatively smooth transition and one marked by confusion and frustration.

Establishing an efficient and cohesive network of Aboriginal service delivery institutions does not necessarily require the creation of large numbers of new agencies and vast increases in funding. Many Aboriginal agencies already exist. In some cases, they are

‘competing’ for Aboriginal clients (and for funding based on the number of clients they attract) with non-Aboriginal agencies. Potential users are often unaware of their existence. Aboriginal people should not be expected to use only Aboriginal agencies. Where a qualified Aboriginal agency exists, however, non-Aboriginal agencies should inform Aboriginal people seeking services of its existence and, when requested, make appropriate referrals. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies providing services in the same area might also explore joint case-management arrangements.

Current expenditures could also be made much more effective. Most funding for urban services is channelled through non-Aboriginal agencies. It is not at all clear that the Aboriginal community benefits as much as it might from these expenditures, especially given the likely absence of Aboriginal representatives on many agency boards. To begin relieving chronic underfunding and ensure that benefits are better targeted, we believe priority should be given to redirecting an appropriate share of existing expenditures to Aboriginal service agencies.

Aboriginal service institutions should be seen as long-term responses to the needs of urban Aboriginal people. For struggling service institutions to develop effective institutional capacity, funding arrangements must become more predictable. Fragmented and ad hoc arrangements promote waste and dependency on the state. They undermine efforts to be accountable to the Aboriginal community and detract from long-term planning and human resources development.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.5**

Provincial, territorial and municipal governments give priority to making the existing Aboriginal service delivery system more comprehensive as the most effective means of meeting the immediate needs of urban Aboriginal people.

### **4.7.6**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments ensure that existing and new Aboriginal service institutions have a stable and secure funding base by

- (a) making contribution and grant agreements with Aboriginal service institutions for periods of at least five years; and
- (b) adjusting funding for existing and new Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies to reflect actual services provided and caseloads.

### ***Non-Aboriginal institutions***

Non-Aboriginal service agencies will continue to provide many services to Aboriginal people. Changes are urgently required to improve access, to involve Aboriginal people in the design, development and delivery of services, and to establish or enhance cross-cultural training. Aboriginal people should be closely involved in reviewing the cultural content of mainstream service delivery and recommending appropriate changes. Government employees working in Aboriginal policy and program development and service delivery should be among those who receive cross-cultural training. We were told that this should include immersion in Aboriginal communities and neighbourhoods.<sup>68</sup>

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.7**

Aboriginal people and organizations be directly involved in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of all services provided to Aboriginal clients by non-Aboriginal agencies.

### **4.7.8**

Staff of non-Aboriginal service agencies directly involved in Aboriginal service delivery be given cross-cultural training delivered by Aboriginal people and organizations and that government funding agreements reflect this obligation.

### ***Status-blind versus separate institutions***

There is debate in the Aboriginal community regarding how services should be provided, in particular whether an agency's services should be directed only to one Aboriginal group or whether all groups should be served ('status-blind' services).

With regard to separate services, should Aboriginal service institutions be autonomous and be an expression of self-government? Should they be accountable to an Aboriginal government? Some of the issues were outlined in a presentation to the Commission on behalf of the Métis National Council (MNC):

While the MNC provincial affiliates have developed an extensive network of program and service delivery institutions, further work is required to determine what the most appropriate political structures would be required in a larger program and service delivery setting....

Self-governing institutions would be similar, would be politically accountable, and may have a network of service delivery institutions not unlike what the anglophones have in Quebec. They have a very extensive network of program and service delivery.

Marc LeClair  
Spokesperson, Métis National Council  
Toronto, Ontario, 26 June 1992

Many Métis and treaty people and organizations, particularly in the prairie provinces, feel strongly that services should be provided on a 'Métis-only' or 'treaty-only' basis. Yvon Dumont, former president of the Métis National Council, favoured separate services for Métis people in his remarks to the Commission in Winnipeg:

At the moment we are looking at strictly Métis institutions for Métis people. We feel that by agreeing to be lumped in with all other Aboriginal people, we run the chance of losing our identity as an Aboriginal people. So we feel that it is important that we concentrate right now on developing and protecting Métis culture and heritage.

Yvon Dumont  
President, Manitoba Metis Federation  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 22 April 1992

Many treaty people and organizations are also vehemently opposed to 'status-blind' service delivery. Instead, they favour services developed by treaty people for treaty people:

As an assembly we...will strive to empower our people through the development of culturally appropriate programs and services for treaty people by treaty people.

We feel that the responsibility to ensure that future generations will benefit from our treaty rights rests with the involvement of our people at all levels of government, particularly in the policy and decision-making processes. There has to be a process that respects the aspirations of urban treaty peoples in the full and free exercise of our inherent rights to representation regardless of residency.

Margaret King  
Saskatoon Treaty and First Nations Assembly  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992

Other Aboriginal people and organizations maintain, however, that separate service delivery only reinforces 'divide and conquer' attitudes, and that services should therefore be delivered on a status-blind basis — all Aboriginal people would qualify for a service, regardless of legal status or cultural heritage.

Some service providers maintain that establishing separate services in urban centres would lead to services being run without sufficient control by the clientele they serve and possibly by administrations that are out of touch with urban needs. Status-blind services would help to overcome this difficulty. This view was put forward to Commissioners in Winnipeg:

The artificial division of Aboriginal people is inappropriate in the urban area. The urban Aboriginal community is committed to the development and delivery of services on a status-blind basis. Urban Aboriginal people must be self-determining. The urban

Aboriginal community does not want to be annexed without any basic democratic rights, into a reserve/rural-based political system controlled by an unresponsive leadership.

Marilyn Fontaine  
Spokesperson, Aboriginal Women's Unity Coalition  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992

It has also been argued that status-blind delivery systems are more cost-effective because they avoid duplication of services.<sup>69</sup>

It is clear that treaty and Métis people in the prairie provinces, especially those closely associated with political organizations, are firmly in favour of separate service institutions. This is not surprising, given their long history of separate institutional development and the different paths they have taken in seeking recognition. Currently, both have institutions or programs in education, training, culture, housing, economic development, and child and family services. Separate institutions have characterized the historical and practical experience of Métis and treaty people in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Distinct delivery structures are most common in Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and, to a slightly lesser degree, Winnipeg.

There is no such history in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic provinces and the northern territories. In these areas generally, and notably in the large urban centres of Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax and Fredericton, service delivery is status-blind. For example, Métis Child and Family Services in Edmonton has been developed specifically for Métis people, while similar services provided through Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Winnipeg and Native Child and Family Services in Toronto are available to all Aboriginal people residing in those cities. Friendship centre services are delivered throughout Canada on a status-blind basis. There does not seem to be strong support for introducing status-blind delivery for some types of services and separate delivery for others.

We are persuaded by the success of friendship centres that status-blind service delivery is generally advantageous in urban areas, because it fosters development of an urban Aboriginal community and promotes efficient use of scarce resources. However, policy development and implementation should also recognize the historical and geographic realities that have motivated the establishment of distinct institutions in some areas.

Service delivery options vary with the size of the client base and local cultural and political conditions. Aboriginal people, their leaders and service providers will ultimately determine the most appropriate systems of urban service delivery. Three fundamental objectives should, however, inform these decisions: first, urban-based strategies and delivery methods must ultimately be broad-based and inclusive; second, retaining and enhancing Aboriginal identity and culture should be cornerstones of urban service delivery; and third, the manner of service delivery must reflect the size of the client base.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.9**

Services to Aboriginal people in urban areas generally be delivered without regard to legal or treaty status.

#### **4.7.10**

Government policies on service delivery take into account the history and tradition of separate institutional development for Métis and treaty people in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta as well as local cultural, political and economic conditions.

### **3.4 Special Perspectives**

Many people told the Commission that the delivery of services in urban areas must be reformed to respond more appropriately to their cultural and spiritual needs. In this section we look at the problem from the perspective of youth and people with disabilities.

#### ***Youth***

The issues confronting urban youth attracted considerable attention at the Commission's round table on urban issues. According to participants, Aboriginal street youth are exposed to tremendous difficulties. A high percentage of the people using needle exchange programs in cities such as Edmonton and Vancouver are Aboriginal youth, and many young people are homeless, live on the streets from day to day, and are involved in prostitution, drugs and violence. Participants spoke in terms of surviving on the streets rather than living.

Many Aboriginal young people are facing the same situations as their older counterparts: cultural confusion, lost identity, high unemployment, violence, racism and substance abuse. Participants also described Aboriginal youth as experiencing much higher rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease than other young Canadians. Young people often wind up living on the streets in urban centres because of abusive situations at home. One participant has seen people as young as 14 dying with needles in their arms. Others said Aboriginal youth need immediate help but that the kinds of services they need are rare and already overburdened.

As part of its research program, the Commission heard from Aboriginal street youth about their situation and experiences. Karen (not her real name) told researchers about the boredom and aimlessness of her life on the streets of Vancouver:

I just kill time, I'd walk around. I'd go to Carnegie and all that. I'd go on Hastings and then I'd go to Granville and walk around there...and see all my friends around Granville. That's about it! I've been on the streets for two years. I'd go home, I'd stay on...I'd go to the streets for a week or so, then I'd go home...for food, I went down to ASU

[Adolescent Street Unit] and got meal tickets, and when I didn't have a place to stay, my friends would offer me a place to stay, so I went with my friends. That's it.<sup>70</sup>

The special needs of Aboriginal youth are often overlooked or underestimated by service agencies developing and delivering programs. Boredom is an ever-present problem. Ways must be found to involve Aboriginal youth in developing programs that they will find relevant. In some cases, it might be sufficient to modify existing programs to ensure that Aboriginal cultural perspectives are accommodated. In other areas, particularly leadership development, programs designed specifically for Aboriginal youth are essential.

Commissioners heard that the future of Aboriginal communities rests with youth as advocates of social change.<sup>71</sup> Building leadership development programs that will instil a vision of what the future requires will be a long-term process, as Linda Clarkson emphasized in her study of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg:

Mobilizing young people to become involved in learning approaches that are aimed at serving others will be a natural extension of the traditional indigenous sense of collective responsibility. At the same time, learning through providing service to others can be a significant step towards breaking the cycle of dependence in which many indigenous people feel themselves trapped....

Mobilizing the direct involvement of youth is a unique and time-consuming process requiring definite skills and resources....Centring youth activities and learning in communities requires a commitment to, and a capacity for, mutual learning, patient listening and a tolerance for contrary views.<sup>72</sup>

The majority of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age. Population projections indicate that the age composition of the Aboriginal population will remain young, compared to the non-Aboriginal population, for at least another 25 years. This demographic reality, coupled with the current shortage of meaningful programming for Aboriginal youth, highlights the need for urgent and aggressive measures in urban centres.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.11**

Aboriginal governments and organizations accord higher priority to youth programming, particularly leadership development, sport and recreation.

### **4.7.12**



Municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments support, fund and actively provide services and programs for urban Aboriginal youth.

#### **4.7.13**

Aboriginal youth be closely involved in the design, development and delivery of youth services.

#### ***Persons with disabilities***

The 1991 Aboriginal peoples survey indicated that there were just over 117,000 Aboriginal adults (aged 15 and over) with disabilities.<sup>73</sup> Many have had little choice but to leave their reserves or home communities and relocate in urban centres in search of appropriate services. In 1991, more than 83,000 Aboriginal adults with a disability were living in non-reserve areas. Of that number, 57,000 lived in urban areas. All too often, however, people with disabilities move to the city only to find jurisdictional disputes and an unsympathetic bureaucracy:

The biggest problem disabled people face is government bureaucracy and jurisdictional problems.

Ian Hinksman  
President, B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society  
Vancouver, British Columbia, 15 November 1993

To the Aboriginal person with a disability, jurisdictional obstacles are often almost insurmountable. Unfortunately, in too many cases even those in charge do not know how to find a solution. It is easy to blame the caregiver, but the caregiver may not necessarily be at fault. In many instances he or she has a crushing caseload and insufficient information about available options.

In addition to jurisdictional bickering between federal, provincial and municipal governments, Aboriginal people with disabilities face a service delivery system that is generally unresponsive to their cultural and spiritual needs, as well as chronic underfunding of the services and programs upon which they rely. They must also deal with inadequate and inaccessible housing; emotional trauma; discrimination because they have a disability and are Aboriginal; barriers to training, employment and economic integration; and a general lack of respect and understanding from the larger society.

We heard from Aboriginal people with disabilities living in urban areas that society in general lacks an appreciation of their everyday struggles and experiences. Most people do not understand what it really means to have a disability and be Aboriginal. As we were told:

Dignity and self-worth will only be achieved when ignorance is replaced by understanding and discrimination is replaced by acceptance.

As it is for other people with disabilities, finding adequate and accessible housing is a major problem for urban Aboriginal people with disabilities. Improved access is still required to many buildings in urban areas, especially for people with visual and hearing impairments. Aboriginal people with disabilities also need a national voice to raise their issues and to press for change in policies and programs in both the public and the private sector.

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.14**

The federal government provide funding for a national organization to represent and speak on behalf of Aboriginal people with disabilities. Support for a national organization should not, however, absolve Aboriginal political organizations of their responsibility to take into account the needs and concerns of people with disabilities.

### **3.5 Friendship Centres**

The first friendship centres were established more than 30 years ago. Since then, they have been the most stable and viable urban Aboriginal organizations. Initially created to provide services to urban newcomers, their information and referral services are designed to help urban Aboriginal people and migrating Aboriginal people gain access to the range of services and resources available in urban areas. There are currently 113 friendship centres across Canada, 99 of which receive core funding from the federal government.

Throughout their history, friendship centres have played two fundamental roles in meeting the needs of urban Aboriginal people: a referral service and a gathering place. The first is a social service function, the second a community development role that has consistently characterized the centres' operations.

Friendship centres have generally been more successful than other Aboriginal institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people in urban areas. Their programs have helped Aboriginal people to maintain their cultural identity and group solidarity. In most urban areas, the friendship centre is the only major voluntary association available to Aboriginal people to fulfil their social, recreational and cultural development needs. Friendship centres have played an important role in the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures currently under way in Aboriginal communities across Canada and have helped Aboriginal people assume a place in the Canadian cultural mosaic.

The centres have produced a wide range of positive achievements for Aboriginal people, including increased pride and self-esteem, and improved access to services, employment,

training, housing and other benefits. Their activities have contributed to the development of stable and active urban Aboriginal communities, particularly their efforts to develop other Aboriginal agencies and organizations, hundreds of which grew out of friendship centre activities. The centres have created greater awareness of Aboriginal issues in urban communities, encouraged non-Aboriginal agencies to be more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, and created a positive image of Aboriginal people. They have also, by reflecting Aboriginal values in their structure and operations, provided a useful model for other community agencies.

Friendship centres have taken a lead in developing holistic services based on Aboriginal values, beliefs and practices such as caring, sharing, respect for others, acceptance, equality, individual responsibility for behaviour, non-interference and an emphasis on experience as a way of knowing. Evaluations of friendship centres consistently conclude that Aboriginal people feel more comfortable participating in centre activities than in activities of non-Aboriginal agencies.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the success of the centres in addressing the needs of Aboriginal people has led to a situation where non-Aboriginal agencies increasingly refer Aboriginal clients to friendship centres.

One of the most important activities of the centres is the promotion of Aboriginal culture. This is particularly important for Aboriginal people in cities because many individuals have lost aspects of their culture, such as languages, and because it is often difficult to practise traditional Aboriginal culture without cultural resources such as elders, places to carry out ceremonies, and cultural education opportunities. Many centres conduct Aboriginal language classes; many more host cultural events such as elders' gatherings, pow-wows, square dances and feasts. These functions will become increasingly important as Aboriginal young people continue to search for ways to strengthen their culture. Friendship centres are ideally placed to expand their role in this regard through education, training, recreation and social programs. However, there is currently no specific funding for cultural education activities outside First Nations territories.

A related public education function assumed by friendship centres is providing a bridge between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Centres often act as a resource, providing information to non-Aboriginal people on the history, cultures and contemporary situation of Aboriginal people. Many centres maintain speakers bureaus of individuals available to address schools and organizations about Aboriginal people and issues. They also regularly conduct cultural awareness workshops and seminars to sensitize the personnel of non-Aboriginal organizations. They are also consulted by municipal governments and institutions on such issues as delivering appropriate services to Aboriginal clients and developing employment equity policies. The demand for expansion of this community development role will likely increase as urban Aboriginal communities become more complex and more insistent on the need to design and deliver appropriate services. The federal government should recognize the important role of friendship centres and provide sufficient resources to enable them to fulfil this community development function.

Friendship centres are the first place many Aboriginal people visit when facing a problem, trying to find out about a particular service, or generally seeking information about urban living. A study carried out in six Canadian cities on behalf of the Commission found that, after education and health institutions, friendship centres were the institutions most frequently used by Aboriginal people.<sup>75</sup> Fully 83 per cent of users were satisfied with their experience.

Although “friendship centres are ready to take a lead role in the co-ordination and/or delivery of services to urban Aboriginal peoples under self-government arrangements”,<sup>76</sup> the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) emphasized in its brief to the Commission that the centres are service providers, not political organizations:

Urban Aboriginal communities are composed of an ever-changing population of status, non-status, Métis people and Inuit. All of these people are represented politically in one form or another by one of the four national groups. The NAFC looks after their service needs — the needs of the entire community for programs to deal with their common problems. Aboriginal people in the cities, regardless of where they come from, are faced with the same issues. Friendship centres exist to address these concerns, not to speak for the people we service.

David Chartrand  
President, National Association of Friendship Centres  
Toronto, Ontario, 26 June 1992

NAFC believes that the National Aboriginal Friendship Centre program, currently administered by Canadian Heritage, should be devolved to NAFC.<sup>77</sup> We share this view, as devolution would support greater Aboriginal self-determination. It would also help ensure that funding allocations to individual friendship centres reflect the needs and aspirations of the urban Aboriginal people who use their programs. NAFC, with the advice, guidance and cumulative experience of its member friendship centres, is best able to respond to funding and policy issues related to the urban services provided by friendship centres.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.15**

The federal government devolve the administration of the National Aboriginal Friendship Centre program to the National Association of Friendship Centres.

## **3.6 The Urban Aboriginal Cultural Education Program**

One of the most important community development activities of friendship centres is the promotion of Aboriginal culture. The promotion and maintenance of a strong cultural

identity is critical to the well-being of urban Aboriginal residents. As David Chartrand, president of the National Association of Friendship Centres, told us:

Aboriginal culture in the cities is threatened in much the same way as Canadian culture is threatened by American culture, and it therefore requires a similar commitment to its protection. Our culture is at the heart of our people, and without awareness of Aboriginal history, traditions and ceremonies, we are not whole people, and our communities lose their strength. Cultural education also works against the alienation that the cities hold for our people. Social activities bring us together and strengthen the relationships between people in areas where those relationships are an important safety net for people who feel left out by the mainstream.

David Chartrand  
President, National Association of Friendship Centres  
Toronto, Ontario, 26 June 1992

We believe that friendship centres could become more involved in cultural education activities, particularly in large urban centres.

A related function is the centres' role in promoting cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding among non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations. Given the growing interest of schools and other institutions in Aboriginal peoples, friendship centres are often asked to participate in events, suggest resource persons, provide display material, give talks on Aboriginal culture, and so on. Although these activities are positive and constructive, friendship centre budgets simply do not enable them to meet all demands.

DIAND administers a cultural/educational centres program. Established in the early 1970s, its mandate is to carry out a wide variety of cultural and educational activities, including cultural research, language research and teaching; curriculum development; cultural sensitivity training for teachers; cultural events such as pow-wows and feasts; support and development of artists and craftspersons; library services; museums and art galleries; theatre, dance and music performances; programs involving elders; youth programs such as summer camps; and cultural ceremonies. There are about 75 cultural/education centres across Canada, with a total budget of \$8 million administered from Ottawa.<sup>78</sup> Most of the centres are run by First Nations governments and are located on reserves or in towns near reserves. Although a small number are situated in large cities, such as Winnipeg and Saskatoon, the program is not generally accessible to those living in urban centres.

We believe that Canadian Heritage should establish a new urban Aboriginal cultural education program, to be administered and operated by friendship centres in larger urban centres across Canada. Friendship centres are the logical base for the program, which would complement the work centres are already doing. But the cultural outreach work currently carried out by the centres is chronically underfunded, too limited, often ad hoc in nature, and heavily dependent on volunteers. There is a need for substantial new institutional support. Although centres could provide some program services on a fee-for-

service basis and generate revenue from the sale of Aboriginal products, capital and administrative core funding would be required.

The goal of the program would be community development through cultural education and programs designed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Its creation would respond to public demand, cross-cultural interest in encouraging such initiatives, and the desire on the part of Aboriginal people to participate in educating the wider society about Aboriginal culture. The program would also serve Aboriginal people by establishing their own learning centres to help them renew their languages and cultures, as well as acquire some of the academic training needed to earn a living in today's society. It would support living traditions and contribute to maintaining essential bridges between urban and non-urban Aboriginal people and between those living in different cities. Centres offering the program could also be involved in developing curriculum materials for schools. Perhaps most important, they could be a major cultural, social and recreational resource for Aboriginal youth in the cities and could help meet the urgent need for institutional support for young people seeking to rekindle the fire of their Aboriginal cultural identity. (See Volume 1, Chapter 15 for a more detailed discussion.)

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.16**

The federal government establish and fund a national urban Aboriginal cultural education program designed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in large urban centres across Canada, to be generally administered by friendship centres.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The existing service delivery system in urban areas is not working well for Aboriginal people. For the most part its cultural values are not those of Aboriginal people, and it does not respond appropriately to their cultural, spiritual and socio-economic needs. Fundamental reform should begin immediately. First, Aboriginal people should, wherever possible, receive services from Aboriginal institutions. These institutions must have adequate, stable funding. The expansion and creation of Aboriginal service institutions in major urban centres, whether as agencies of Aboriginal governments or as autonomous entities, is the most effective and systematic method of responding to the needs of urban Aboriginal people over the long term and should be supported by municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments. Second, Aboriginal people should be involved directly in the design, development and delivery of services provided by governments and mainstream agencies. Intensive and field-oriented cross-cultural training for non-Aboriginal service providers is essential.

We are particularly encouraged by the role friendship centres have played in urban service delivery, despite their limited resources, and we believe that the National

Association of Friendship Centres should be given authority and responsibility for friendship centre programs currently administered by the federal government. We also recommend that the federal government establish a national urban Aboriginal cultural education program, to be operated by friendship centres in major urban centres.

#### **4. Aboriginal Women in Urban Areas**

Although their roles in formal and informal institutions are crucial to the day-to-day survival of urban Aboriginal people, the needs of urban Aboriginal women are virtually invisible, and the reality of their lives often remains unrecognized and unvalidated. In their submissions to Commissioners, they called for their presence to be recognized and their needs acknowledged:

We urge the Commission to take into account in its proceedings the specific needs of Aboriginal women and their families in the urban setting. More than others, they are often ill-equipped and the victims of segregation and discrimination. [translation]

Éléonor Huff  
Quebec Native Women's Association  
Montreal, Quebec, 27 May 1993

Indian country is not [just] a man's world. Women will continue to be resident as long as man will exist and inhabit these same territories, and so will our children and their children always. Status women resident off-reserve are too often a forgotten minority. Many become urbanized due to family abuse, separations and deaths, others, for personal reasons. These women and their children are the abused, personally and mentally.

Shirley Gamble  
Brandon, Manitoba  
10 December 1992

#### **4.1 Who Are Urban Aboriginal Women?**

First Nations, Métis and Inuit are all represented among urban Aboriginal women. They outnumber men in each group (see Table 7.1). They are also young; more than half (53.9 per cent) are 24 years of age or under, compared to less than one-third of non-Aboriginal women living in urban centres. Only one urban Aboriginal woman in 20 is over 55 years of age; the figure for the comparable non-Aboriginal population is one in five.

Urban Aboriginal women have higher levels of education than the female Aboriginal population in general. But this does not necessarily lead to employment. The unemployment rate for urban Aboriginal women is 21 per cent, compared to just under 10 per cent for non-Aboriginal urban women (Table 7.1).

TABLE 7.1  
**Comparison of Aboriginal Identity and Non-Aboriginal Populations in Urban Off-Reserve Areas, 1991**

	<b>Non-Total Aboriginal</b>	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>Registered NAI</b>	<b>Non- Registered NAI</b>	<b>Métis</b>	<b>Inuit<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Demography<sup>2</sup></b>						
Total Adjusted Population (#)	20,060,875	320,000	148,500	77,800	90,100	8,400
Male (%)	48.9	46	43.9	47.6	48	51
Female (%)	51.1	54	56.1	52.4	52	49
0-14 years (%)	19.7	36.6	33.4	41	37.5	42
15-24 years (%)	14.3	20	21.2	18.3	19	20.9
25-34 years (%)	18.5	19.7	20.6	18.5	19.6	17.1
35-54 years (%)	27.2	18.3	19.2	17.5	18.1	14
55+ years (%)	20.3	5.4	5.6	4.7	5.8	6
Lone parents <sup>3</sup> (%)	3.8	8.2	10.1	6.1	7.2	5.2
	<b>Non-Total Aboriginal</b>	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>Registered NAI</b>	<b>Non- Registered NAI</b>	<b>Métis</b>	<b>Inuit<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Language<sup>3</sup></b>						
Speak an Aboriginal language						
(age 5-14)	—	5.2	7.8	—	2.6	29.3
Speak an Aboriginal language						
(age 15+)	—	17.6	25.3	5.6	11.3	42
Would like to learn to speak an						
Aboriginal language (age 15+)	—	73.6	77.2	68.7	73.6	69.8
	<b>Non-Total Aboriginal</b>	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>Registered NAI</b>	<b>Non- Registered NAI</b>	<b>Métis</b>	<b>Inuit<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Education<sup>3</sup> (age 15+)</b>						
Less than high school certificate (%)	35.6	49.7	48.5	43	52.2	58.3
High school or trade certificate (%)	18.7	13.1	11.9	16.6	12.9	10.7
Non-university certificate (%)	15.8	14.8	13.9	18	14.7	14.6
University degree (%)	13	3.8	3.1	5.8	3.6	—
<b>Labour Force Activity<sup>3</sup></b>						
Participation rate (%)	68.1	62.7	58.4	68.8	65.3	66.9
Unemployment rate (%)	9.7	22.9	27.4	27.4	20	25.9
Average total income (\$)	24,876	16,560	15,392	18,772	16,853	17,045
% with total income less than \$10,000	26.2	35.3	37.3	31.7	34.5	35.9
% receiving government transfer income	19	18.2	21.6	13.9	17.5	13.5

Notes:

NAI = North American Indian.

— Not available or not applicable.



1. Adjusted Inuit demographic counts were derived by applying the percentage of urban Inuit from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (aps) actual counts to the total adjusted urban Inuit count.
2. Approximately 10,000 was added to the aps count to adjust for undercoverage of the population in participating urban off-reserve areas.
3. Percentages are based on actual (non-adjusted) 1991 aps counts.

Source: M.J. Norris et al., "Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016", research study prepared by Statistics Canada for RCAP (February 1995); and 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations.

## 4.2 Migration

The majority of Aboriginal migrants to urban areas are women (Table 7.2). Women are considerably more likely than men to move to the city because of community factors (Table 7.3). Some leave their home communities to escape physical and sexual abuse. All too typical was the woman who told of leaving home at 13 and growing up on the streets. For her, the choice was either living in a small rural community and being sexually abused and silenced by her family, or leaving the community and living on the streets of the city which, though violent, felt safer.<sup>79</sup> Women told Commissioners:

TABLE 7.2  
**Aboriginal Migrants by Sex and Destination, 1991**

Destination	Men	Women	Women as a % of all migrants
On-reserve	6,000	6,635	52.5
Rural, off-reserve	7,165	9,285	56.4
Urban, non-cma	10,020	13,970	58.2
Urban, cma	13,465	18,395	57.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,650</b>	<b>48,285</b>	<b>56.8</b>

Note: Includes migrants age 15 years and older.  
Cma = Census Metropolitan Area.

Source: S.J. Clatworthy, "Migration and Mobility Patterns of Canada's Aboriginal Population", research study prepared for RCAP (February 1995).

TABLE 7.3  
**Reasons for Migration to Off-Reserve Locations, 1991**

	Men	%	Women	%
Family-related	1,490	32.0	1,930	28.6
Housing	1,025	22.0	1,515	22.5
Access to employment	1,065	22.9	1,175	17.4
Community factors	100	2.2	765	11.4

Access to school	540	11.6	755	11.2
Forced to move	220	4.7	380	5.6
Health-related	165	3.5	120	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,605</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,640</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Note:* Includes migrants age 15 years and older.

*Source:* S.J. Clatworthy, "The Migration and Mobility Patterns of Canada's Aboriginal Population", research study prepared for RCAP (February 1995).

Strong networks of families exist in a community. When abuse is exposed, those networks are disrupted. People feel powerless. Women leave Native communities and go to the city to escape abuse.<sup>80</sup>

Other women described how their needs were not taken seriously by the people in power on their reserves and how they had no control over the issues that directly affected them:

Presently the women in our communities are suffering from dictatorship governments that have been imposed on us by the Indian Act. We are oppressed in our communities. Our women have no voice, nowhere to go for appeal processes. If we are being discriminated against within our community or when we are being abused in our communities, where do the women go?...The Royal Commission to date has not heard the true story of Aboriginal women's oppression. The women are afraid to come out and speak in a public forum such as this. We are penalized if we say anything about the oppression that we have to undergo in our community.

Joyce Courchene  
 President, Nongom Ikkwe  
 Indigenous Women's Collective  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, 3 June 1992

Many Aboriginal women moved away from reserve communities because they lost status (usually by marrying a non-Indian) and the legal right to reside there under paragraph 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act. Since 1985 and the passage of Bill C-31, which amended the act, many have regained their status. Women who have regained status are more likely than men to live in urban areas, as are women who have applied for reinstatement. Many Aboriginal women have no option, therefore, but to live in urban areas, even though they would prefer to live in their community of origin. Their options are circumscribed by abuse, loss of status or the fact that their needs and perspectives are not taken into account by decision makers in their communities:

While some women with Bill C-31 status prefer to live in urban areas, others want to return to their reserve community but cannot, because there are no resources to accommodate them, or band membership codes exclude them.

Vicki English-Currie  
 Calgary Native Women's Shelter  
 Calgary, Alberta, 26 May 1992

### 4.3 The Urban Experience

We cannot present a complete picture of the lives of urban Aboriginal women. Too many voices are missing. But some common concerns did emerge from the testimony we heard. Urban Aboriginal women made it very clear that moving to an urban centre was not a rejection of Aboriginal cultures and values:

Just because we reside in urban centres we did not give up as an Indian; we did not give up our status; we did not give up our treaties; we did not give up our band membership; we did not give up our tribal affiliations; we did not give up our linguistic affiliations; and we never gave up our right to live. We have never given up maintaining our rights as members of our bands. We are not non-Native. We continue to live Indian.

Shirley Gamble  
Brandon, Manitoba  
10 December 1992

For many Aboriginal women, however, migration to the city distances them from community support networks and makes it very difficult for them to enhance their connections to their cultures. Access to their teachers, grandmothers and clan mothers is limited. There are few elders in urban centres, and finding guidance and training in traditional ways is not easy.

In addition to being isolated from extended families and communities, urban women are too often isolated from each other:

We do know that, in many instances, life for Aboriginal women off-reserve can be even more problematic especially if they are lacking the prospects for employment. These women have less support systems and services available to them and they are often very much alone, without the physical or emotional support of family members (which in some cases they enjoyed on the reserve). Unemployed and left to their own devices, they often feel alienated and alone, helpless, powerless, and “without a voice”.<sup>81</sup>

Women spoke of their desire to find their roles as urban Aboriginal women, to make connections and build networks in the urban Aboriginal communities.<sup>82</sup> They spoke of establishing their own organizations in urban centres to meet their distinct needs.<sup>83</sup>

Political organizations and leadership were also a focus of women’s submissions to the Commission. Women from all Aboriginal groups documented their exclusion from existing decision-making bodies.<sup>84</sup> Urban Aboriginal women want to be involved in self-government negotiations, and they want to play political, social, economic and spiritual roles in self-governing structures. The roles Aboriginal women have played traditionally in governance and their responsibilities with regard to family, children and the elderly reinforce the importance of key roles for them in decision-making processes. In their submission to Commissioners, the Indian Homemakers’ Association of British Columbia stated:

The involvement of women in the political process can mean more action on issues that have been the root of our oppression as Aboriginal women. Such issues as family violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, child care and housing can then be recognized as serious issues and put onto the agenda of priorities.<sup>85</sup>

Aboriginal women also described the racism and discrimination they encounter in urban life:

Our women face racism and systemic stereotyping at every turn. For Aboriginal women, this racism and stereotyping is rampant right through the system, from the police to the courts, child welfare agencies to income security. Although the law is supposed to treat everyone equally, we all know this is not an Aboriginal reality.

Darlene Hall  
Ikwe Widdjiitiwin  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992

#### **4.4 Housing**

Discrimination in obtaining housing was mentioned often by women appearing at the Commission's public hearings:

I have been denied housing because of my skin colour. I have been denied housing because I am a single mom. Being a Native and being a single mom really is discouraging because you can't get anywhere; you have that double-whammy put on you.

Lisa Maracle  
Brantford, Ontario, 14 May 1993

Providing and sharing shelter is one of the most important ways Aboriginal women maintain family and community ties in urban centres.<sup>86</sup> Interviews with tenants of Aboriginal urban housing corporations highlighted two benefits of such housing for urban Aboriginal women:

Family stability....For many [Aboriginal families] it meant that they did not have to constantly move from one place to another or to live with friends or relatives in an overcrowded setting. It meant a sense of permanence, or establishing some roots in the city while maintaining ties with reserve or rural communities....

Growing sense of Aboriginal community in the urban setting....For the first time people's basic needs for affordable shelter were being addressed, allowing them to begin to address other needs such as employment, education and cultural retention. The community became more identifiable and could be contacted more readily to participate in various social, cultural, and recreational activities.<sup>87</sup>

Suitable housing is key to improving the situation of Aboriginal women and families in urban areas. As our discussion of urban demographics later in this chapter demonstrates,

affordable housing is badly needed. Our recommendations in this regard are contained in Volume 3, Chapter 4.

## 4.5 Services

Aboriginal women told Commissioners that their need for services is not being met by existing agencies and institutions. They said that most urban institutions are not equipped to provide culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal women and their families. They appealed for more input on the design and implementation of service delivery.

We heard of negative experiences women have had with a variety of service institutions and the consequences of these experiences.<sup>88</sup> Many no longer even call the police for urgent assistance, for example, because they do not expect to get any service:

[I]f an Aboriginal woman calls the police because she is being assaulted, she is not always treated in the same manner as a non-Aboriginal woman making the same call. When we talk to women about calling the police for assistance, very often their response is, “Why bother, they will probably just ask me if I was drinking”. Our women get this treatment from all aspects of the system.

Darlene Hall  
Ikwe Widdjiitwin  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992

Some Aboriginal women living in urban areas have learned to fear and distrust the very agencies that are supposed to be helping them. They have found, for example, that when they are victims of family violence and seek support in non-Aboriginal women’s shelters, they are not received the same way as other women:

But when a non-native woman goes in they don’t even bother to take her children away. They are there to comfort her and give her counselling. When people like me or someone else goes in, right away they take their children. You really have to fight to hang on to them. You really have to prove yourself as a mother, and the other non-native women do not have to do so.

Kula Ellison  
Aboriginal Women’s Council of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992

For some women, the circumstances precipitating a move to an urban area mean that they arrive seeking healing. But they usually find that the kind of support they need is not available. Rarely do urban support services offer traditional spiritual practices, healing medicines or women’s teachings that reflect Aboriginal values. Access to elders is limited, if available at all. Aboriginal women also find, when dealing with non-Aboriginal agencies and institutions, that the staff is untrained to deal with issues critical to Aboriginal women such as cultural expectations with regard to family roles and the effects of long-term colonization on individuals and families.

First Nations women believe that programs and funding available to women living on reserves should also be made available to women living in cities:

As a recourse, I personally would like to see urban Indian women given the same status and treatment as our Bill C-31 sisters and their families on reserves, only I want to stay off-reserve. I want my home paid for by my band so that I too can live successfully on or off-reserve. As band members anywhere in Canada, I think the time is right for reversing certain policies drawn up by non-Natives for Natives.

Shirley Gamble  
Brandon, Manitoba  
10 December 1992

These comments were echoed in other centres. In Saskatoon, Commissioners were told that treaty Indian women are organizing to ensure that governments in their communities of origin acknowledge their existence and take some responsibility for them.<sup>89</sup> Commissioners were urged to affirm “the mobility of our rights as treaty Indian women”.<sup>90</sup>

Commissioners also heard that Aboriginal women have shown leadership in developing Aboriginal urban institutions and that “through their contribution we have been able to develop a network of services geared to the essential needs of Aboriginal people living in or passing through urban centres”.<sup>91</sup> Now, many urban Aboriginal women are appealing for services that meet the specific needs of women. They are seeking a major role in the design and delivery of services, particularly in the area of child welfare. Commissioners were told of their desire to establish their own institutions in urban centres:

We want Native centres and organizations which will deal strictly in Native women’s issues. We want Native women’s transition homes and a safe house locally, a Native women’s drug and alcohol treatment centre, a Native women’s resource centre to provide counselling services and all abuse prevention measures. Native women need liaison workers between the Native community and the Ministry of Social Services and Housing because many Native women fear and dislike dealing with the white middle class social workers. Native women need a centre to help mothers deal with feelings of loss and anger, to learn how to empower ourselves and to redevelop our traditional Native parenting skills. Native women need daycare resources to enable them to further their education, develop life skills and seek employment. Urban Native women want recreational funding for their children, in order to develop self-esteem and healthy lifestyles.

Jackie Adams  
Port Alberni, British Columbia  
20 May 1992

## **4.6 Conclusion**

Women form the majority of urban Aboriginal populations, as well as the majority of migrants to urban areas. Aboriginal women play a critical role and assume much of the

responsibility for the well-being of Aboriginal people in urban communities; their initiatives have been essential in ensuring the day-to-day survival of Aboriginal people and cultures in cities. Their presence and roles must be recognized and their needs met. Aboriginal women must be involved in shaping the evolving relationship between Aboriginal people and urban authorities. There is overwhelming evidence that urban service delivery institutions are not meeting the specific needs of urban Aboriginal women. Action to correct this situation is urgently required.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.17**

Aboriginal women give Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service agencies direction and guidance in formulating policy and developing services that may be used by Aboriginal women and children and participate fully in the delivery of programs and services established specifically to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal women.

### **4.7.18**

In addition to cross-cultural training, non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations whose work or responsibilities directly affect urban Aboriginal women's lives receive comprehensive information and education on the situation of urban Aboriginal women.

## **5. Governance for Aboriginal People in Urban Areas**

Commissioners found that self-government in urban areas raises a host of conceptual and practical questions that are difficult to resolve. Self-government off a land base requires a different approach than the land-based models most often associated with Aboriginal self-government.

Representations to the Commission and our own research highlight a pressing need to address governance issues in urban centres. In the words of Dan Smith, president of the United Native Nations of British Columbia:

I want to emphasize that there is an urgent need for non-reserve Aboriginal people to be treated equally and fairly. After all, we are working toward the same end...whether [we] reside on- or off-reserve. The majority of bands, tribal councils and treaty areas do not have the capacity or infrastructure to address off-reserve Aboriginal issues and concerns...Historically, off-reserve Aboriginal people have had to look after themselves individually, and then over a period of time to organize into groups for mutual support. Self-determination for individuals and families is the foundation of Aboriginal people both on- and off-reserve.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities emphasized in its brief to the Commission that municipalities have not been consulted regarding the potential effect on local responsibilities of negotiations and agreements between Aboriginal people and other orders of government:

During consultations across the country, it became evident that both municipalities and Aboriginal peoples are frequently not knowledgeable of each other's difficulties and concerns. To some degree, the aspirations of both local governments and Aboriginal peoples have been marginalized and compromised by federal and provincial governments. As a result, the interface of municipal/Aboriginal interests, important to Aboriginal self-government, has been rendered all but completely invisible.<sup>92</sup>

Although the federation acknowledged the view that self-government is an inherent right, it said that Aboriginal governments should exercise delegated authority similar to municipal governments. At the same time, it recognized the need for Aboriginal-controlled organizations to deliver services in a culturally appropriate manner. While emphasizing the need for all orders of government to co-operate in defining appropriate areas of jurisdiction, the federation was also concerned that the federal government continue to assume some degree of responsibility for Aboriginal people in urban areas:

For its part, the federal government cannot draw a line separating Aboriginal people on reserves and Aboriginal people in urban areas....The needs of urban Aboriginal people must be met through a distinct process separate from agreements with reserves. In this context, municipalities must be included in discussion among governments with respect to changes in their relations with Aboriginal peoples. Municipalities should not be left responsible for services previously provided by federal or provincial governments without consultation and an appropriate transfer of funds.<sup>93</sup>

In this section we consider various pathways to governance for Aboriginal people living in urban areas. First we consider reforms to existing public institutions to accommodate urban Aboriginal peoples' aspirations for greater participation in governance where they live and work. These reforms would not constitute Aboriginal self-government as such. Next, we consider how the objectives of self-government could be achieved through an urban Aboriginal community of interest approach, involving members with diverse Aboriginal origins. Finally, we explore approaches premised on the Aboriginal nation.

These three approaches are points along a spectrum of possibilities for urban governance. The reform of mainstream public institutions is a relatively integrated form of governance, while governance based on the nation would be a more autonomous form of self-government. We have concluded that the first two approaches, the reform of public institutions and community of interest government, can be implemented now as a priority in urban areas. Approaches that take the nation as their starting point are more likely to



unfold over the longer term, as the process of rebuilding nations takes place. Urban Aboriginal people should be active participants in such processes.

## **5.1 Reform of Urban Governments and Public Authorities**

While urban Aboriginal people express interest in self-government, there is also potential, especially in the short term, for greater involvement of urban Aboriginal people in mainstream urban governments. Even if self-government is established in cities and towns, the relationship between urban Aboriginal people and mainstream governments and institutions will not disappear. Various aspects of the legislation and services of local, provincial, territorial and federal governments will still extend to urban Aboriginal people. For these reasons we believe that urban governments and public authorities can be reformed to take better account of Aboriginal perspectives and interests.

Possibilities at the local government level include

- guaranteeing Aboriginal representation on school boards, boards of health, hospital boards, police commissions and other institutions whose work especially affects the lives of urban Aboriginal people;
- establishing permanent Aboriginal affairs committees by municipal councils, school boards and other agencies, boards and commissions; and
- potentially co-managing urban initiatives, particularly in areas where federal, provincial or territorial legislation has recognized a role for Aboriginal governments.

### ***Guaranteed representation on appointed local bodies***

Local government includes many agencies, boards and commissions. Unlike municipal councils and school boards, which are generally elected, police commissions, library boards, public health boards, recreation boards, hospital boards and many others are composed of appointees or a mix of elected representatives and appointees. Appointments are made by municipal councils, provincial or territorial governments, or sometimes both. Candidates for positions are sought in a variety of ways.

At the Commission's urban round table, participants noted that Aboriginal people are not generally represented on local boards and commissions, even when they have a clearly demonstrable interest. Aboriginal people may have a particular interest in the work of police boards, hospital boards and historical boards in many Canadian centres, to name a few obvious examples. As in the case of non-Aboriginal appointees, Aboriginal people on local boards and commissions should enjoy appropriate standing in their community, in addition to being suited to the requirements of board membership.

### ***Aboriginal affairs committees***

Another possibility for enhancing understanding between Aboriginal people and local governments is to establish Aboriginal affairs committees of municipal councils, school boards, and other boards and commissions to advise on issues in which the Aboriginal population has a particular interest. One example is Calgary's Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, an advisory committee with a majority of members drawn from the Aboriginal community. Committees of this kind help to foster understanding of the situation and priorities of Aboriginal residents. Two elements are essential to their success. First, the appointed Aboriginal members must have strong roots in the community and must reflect its composition. Second, the committee's relationship to the council or board must be well-defined and direct. The link between many urban issues and the situation of Aboriginal people living in cities and towns requires regular meetings between an Aboriginal affairs committee and the body to which it reports. Furthermore, the parent body must have substantial, not just token, representation on the committee. This will encourage the development of mutual understanding in sufficient depth to deal with issues and to avoid an 'us/them' relationship.

### *Co-management*

Co-management arrangements are a way of bridging relations between Aboriginal governments representing urban residents and local, provincial, territorial and federal governments. At the most practical level, co-management ensures access to common services by all urban residents, while recognizing the essential aspects of Aboriginal culture that are the foundation of self-government.

Co-management does not necessarily imply creating separate Aboriginal institutions. Institutions and services could be established by a provincial, territorial, federal and in some cases local government to serve the general population, with specific provisions for Aboriginal people. Co-management of the institution or service, and the nature of Aboriginal participation, would be established in most cases through enabling legislation or negotiated agreements. For example, a provincial minister of education might mandate the establishment of an Aboriginal education authority in an urban centre. A co-management board might be established, providing for significant Aboriginal participation but also the participation of provincial and municipal representatives. The co-management framework might include provisions to safeguard provincial interests, as well as affirm the education authority's primary role in determining and meeting the educational needs and interests of Aboriginal residents.

Local governments exercise authority delegated by provincial and territorial governments. This limits their ability to delegate further. Co-management arrangements would therefore generally be implemented by federal, provincial or territorial legislation, even though they involve local services or functions. In fields such as culture and recreation, however, local agreements could be the foundation for co-management. However, municipal governments, officials and representatives should be involved in establishing and operating co-management arrangements where appropriate, or where municipal interests are affected.

These approaches do not represent self-government as such for urban Aboriginal people. All involve Aboriginal people working within the legislative, policy and administrative frameworks of mainstream Canadian governments. While this reality may afford urban Aboriginal people only limited opportunity to influence governance in urban centres, there are still important benefits. These include having a voice in local government decision making and promoting greater understanding and good relations between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people in urban centres.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.19**

Positions be designated for Aboriginal representatives on local boards and commissions responsible for services and the boards of institutions in which Aboriginal people have a significant interest.

### **4.7.20**

Municipal councils and school boards in municipalities with a large Aboriginal population establish Aboriginal affairs committees to provide advice and guidance on Aboriginal issues.

### **4.7.21**

Municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments seek opportunities for co-management arrangements that would involve Aboriginal people in establishing, managing and operating urban institutions, programs and services in which they have an interest.

## **5.2 Urban Communities of Interest**

On its own, reform of mainstream urban governance structures will not meet the aspirations of urban Aboriginal people for governance arrangements based on autonomy and self-government. A survey by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples of more than 1,300 Aboriginal people living in six major metropolitan centres found that “virtually all Aboriginal respondents (92 per cent) either strongly (66 per cent) or somewhat (26 per cent) support this effort to have Aboriginal people in urban areas run their own affairs”.<sup>94</sup> One option is for urban Aboriginal communities to take steps to govern themselves.

In describing these approaches, we use the term ‘urban community of interest’ to designate a collectivity that emerges in an urban setting, includes people of diverse Aboriginal origins,<sup>95</sup> and ‘creates itself’ through voluntary association. The approach encompasses two possibilities. One involves the urban community of interest in multiple government functions and activities. The second is a more simplified form in which the

community of interest acts through a single-function institution and is organized for limited government purposes. (The urban community of interest model is also developed in Volume 2, Chapter 3.)

### ***Multiple-function community of interest governments***

Under the multiple-function community of interest model, the urban community of interest could form a self-governing, city-wide body with political and administrative functions, exercising self-government in a range of sectors and through a variety of institutions. In many cases, existing urban Aboriginal institutions would play an essential role in developing this form of governance because of their extensive experience in providing services to the urban Aboriginal population.<sup>96</sup> A study of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, for example, proposes an approach to urban self-government based on co-operation among, and further development of, existing institutions.<sup>97</sup> An urban community of interest government would act through an array of agencies and institutions, establish an umbrella political structure to oversee and co-ordinate activities, and be recognized as a self-governing entity within the city.

In most cases the geographic reach of this form of governance would correspond to the municipal boundaries of a city or town. The jurisdiction of the community of interest government would have more of a communal orientation, however, relating to persons who participate voluntarily rather than to territory. Its jurisdiction in most instances would be delegated by provincial or federal governments as appropriate. A community of interest government could also operate on the basis of delegated authority from an Aboriginal nation, but probably only when members of the community of interest are predominantly from that nation.

It may also be possible for community of interest governments in different cities to co-operate with each other, or for urban communities of interest and nation-based Aboriginal governments to make agreements. The Native Council of Canada noted that “a supra-urban structure could play a vital role...[I]t could form a further level of pan-Aboriginality binding together all of the urban communities in Canada or within a specific region”.<sup>98</sup> Community of interest governments could enter into agreements with other Aboriginal governments, including other urban governments, to co-operate in delivering some services. These agreements could play an important role in the efficient delivery of services to urban Aboriginal people.

A major strength of the urban community of interest approach is the opportunity it offers Aboriginal people in urban areas who have no other access to self-government. In many cases, these are the people who have the greatest need to affirm and enhance their cultural identity. Another strength is the likelihood that urban community of interest governments would be highly responsive to the particular needs of local communities. The approach would also provide a vehicle for immediate action on the part of non-Aboriginal governments to improve the situation of Aboriginal people in urban areas. Steps could be taken to support consensus and community building and to improve urban Aboriginal people’s access to and control of institutions providing services.

Possibly the greatest challenge underlying this approach to self-government lies in the need to build many urban communities of interest from scratch. The potential difficulties have been described by scholar Bradford W. Morse:

In the urban setting, asking the individual members of the potentially very diverse urban group, each with their own unique identity, traditions, language and culture, to put aside their differences and build a new community is a formidable task. It requires the rejection of the long history of federal intervention, and for the urban Aboriginal population to come to terms with their diversity in a way which can foster Aboriginal government with a diverse non-homogeneous population.<sup>99</sup>

A process of healing, consensus building and education about the options may be necessary to create a basis for meaningful participation by urban residents in decisions about governance.<sup>100</sup>

A final challenge for urban communities is the limited range of services that can be supported, especially where population numbers are low. However, co-operating with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments to deliver particular services may provide a mechanism for urban Aboriginal people to ensure that a broad range of needs can be met.

### *Single-function urban institutions*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, many urban Aboriginal service institutions exist or are emerging in areas such as education, health, social services, housing and cultural affairs. We anticipate that in some cases urban communities of interest will want to act in a self-governing capacity through such institutions and in selected service sectors. For example, a community of interest's self-government objectives may be limited to establishing an Aboriginal-controlled education facility, such as a high school, or an Aboriginal health services clinic.

Implementation of such approaches to governance should not disrupt the delivery of existing services to urban residents through these institutions or the continued development and emergence of Aboriginal-controlled, single-function institutions. Speaking at a workshop on urban self-government, Terry Mountjoy, manager of Regina's social development unit, identified some of the city's concerns regarding the future of urban institutions not affiliated with either the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan or the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations:

For years, these local, non-affiliated groups have delivered many services to a large number of Aboriginal people in the city....As the political environment changes, it is important that these services not be disrupted. These groups also "represent" a number of Aboriginal residents of the city who support culturally appropriate but integrated services. This Aboriginal constituency currently lacks a voice at the main national and provincial negotiating tables.<sup>101</sup>

Existing service institutions can contribute greatly to the community building required to develop urban community of interest governments. They provide opportunities for self-determination to relatively small, diverse Aboriginal populations that are too few in number to form urban governments. They could also continue to meet the immediate needs of urban Aboriginal people, and they might eventually be incorporated into Aboriginal governments with multiple functions.

Supporting and enhancing the work of existing urban institutions does present certain challenges. Autonomous service institutions might fragment urban communities and encourage the creation of competing organizations. Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments could see them as substitutes for other initiatives. Therefore, it is important that all governments recognize these challenges and work to minimize their negative impact.

In our view, whether they choose to be self-governing through single-function institutions or through governments that serve a variety of purposes and needs, urban communities of interest represent a viable pathway to self-government. Moreover, they have the added advantage that they can be implemented almost immediately, with the co-operation of federal, provincial and municipal governments.

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **4.7.22**

Where urban Aboriginal residents wish to pursue self-government based on an urban community of interest, whether involved in multiple government functions or acting through a single institution,

(a) municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments foster and support community building, including, where appropriate, developing the community of interest's governance initiative; and

(b) municipal, provincial, territorial and federal governments participate in negotiations to establish urban community of interest governments and assist them in operating institutions and services for members of the community of interest.

### **5.3 Nation-Based Approaches to Urban Self-Government**

The relationship to their traditional land remains fundamental for many urban Aboriginal people. The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, which represents off-reserve Aboriginal people in New Brunswick, made the point clearly:

The cultural basis of Aboriginal peoples in the Province of New Brunswick is in their special relationship with the land and, in essence, they are defined by the land on which they have subsisted and lived....

While the off-reserve Aboriginal people of New Brunswick do not have a specific land base, the Province of New Brunswick has always been viewed as Aboriginal land in its entirety. The Aboriginal communities of New Brunswick have always felt that the lands outside the reserves are traditional lands, and have continued to use them for harvesting and spiritual practices, as was promised in all the Treaties signed in the past.<sup>102</sup>

Many Aboriginal people living in urban areas also maintain strong ties to their nations of origin and look to them for participation in self-governing arrangements. For example, some participants at the Commission's round table on urban issues insisted that their identity is tied to their homelands:

They said their cultural identities as First Nations people are tied to their communities, just as the identities of Métis flow from their settlements. The answer was for each group to extend jurisdiction from these home territories over the Aboriginal urban population.<sup>103</sup>

Several approaches have been suggested that take as their starting point urban Aboriginal peoples' nations of origin. These include the extra-territorial jurisdiction model; the host nation model; approaches proposed by the Metis Nation for institutions and distinct urban political communities; and the urban treaty nation governance model. All of these nation-based approaches to urban government must be based on the voluntary participation of individual urban citizens.

Under these approaches, the accountability of a nation government to its urban citizens will continue to present some challenges. In submissions to the Commission, many urban Aboriginal people said that their nations of origin did not take responsibility for their needs or well-being. While nation-based models of government may not resolve all problems of representation and government responsiveness, we believe the nation-based approaches outlined here are potential routes to self-government for urban Aboriginal people who wish to retain political and other ties with a nation of origin.

### ***Extra-territorial jurisdiction***

Under this approach, an Aboriginal nation with jurisdiction over a land base might exercise extra-territorial jurisdiction over its citizens living outside its exclusive land base, including in urban areas. The nation of origin could establish service agencies and other institutions to serve those of its urban citizens who chose to participate. It might also establish structures for their political representation — for example, a designated position on the governing council of the nation or a separate urban council with advisory or decision-making powers.

An example of this approach is provided by the Siksika Nation in Alberta, which has included the Siksika population of Calgary in its long-term self-government planning and

its strategy for self-government negotiations. In these negotiations, the Siksika Nation proposes that its reserve-based government have jurisdiction over all Siksika citizens, on- or off-reserve, and that the nation take full responsibility for providing programs and services for them. In Calgary, where a significant number of nation members live, exercise of this responsibility would presumably take the form of service agencies and institutions for Siksika people. The Siksika Nation has signed a protocol agreement with the Siksika Urban Association in Calgary that affirms the inclusion of all Siksika in the Siksika Nation, regardless of place of residence, and their representation by the Siksika Nation chief and council.<sup>104</sup>

This approach would help dissolve distinctions between on- and off-reserve residents and would reinforce links to urban Aboriginal people's nations of origin; it has considerable support among First Nations.<sup>105</sup> Current initiatives are already addressing issues of design and implementation, and the results will be available to guide other First Nations.

This approach also has its share of challenges, however. Urban residents say they have frequently been ignored by their nations of origin. Adopting this approach, therefore, would require a reorientation of priorities and changes in decision-making structures. Also, the exercise of extra-territorial jurisdiction by individual Aboriginal nations might not be possible in urban areas that are home to Aboriginal people from a large number of nations. Serious inequalities could emerge among Aboriginal residents in a particular city if there were differences in the range and quality of programs and services provided by different Aboriginal nations. Finally, this approach potentially excludes a large number of urban Aboriginal people, because some nations would find it difficult to provide services in an urban area where their members are sparsely represented or far from the nation's land base.

### *Host nation*

Many Canadian cities and towns are located on the traditional lands of Aboriginal nations, raising the possibility of linking urban Aboriginal governance with the traditional territories of Aboriginal nations. Under the host nation approach, an Aboriginal nation's jurisdiction could be extended to Aboriginal people living in urban centres in its traditional territory. The nation would act as a 'host' to Aboriginal residents from various nations and recognize them as forming one of its communities. This would require both a nation and an urban Aboriginal population willing to co-operate. The extent of governance exercised by the host nation would vary, but in most instances it would begin with program and service delivery. The host nation's authority would extend only to people who agreed to participate — those who chose to use programs and services offered by the host nation. Thus, the host nation would act in a governance capacity in relation to its own citizens as well as to the citizens of other Aboriginal nations who chose to associate with it for these purposes.

In terms of political representation, the host nation's government structure could allow for representation of urban Aboriginal people. Alternatively, the nation could establish a separate board, agency or council for the urban Aboriginal community to advise the



nation government on its activities as host or to organize and operate urban programs, services and institutions directly.

The host nation concept could be implemented in various ways. For example, the host nation might have a prominent and central role in program and service delivery, with institutions and agencies bearing the stamp of that nation, its culture and traditions. Alternatively, as with other communities of the nation, the urban community could affirm its distinctiveness through programs and services that reflect the diversity of its membership.

The extent of the host nation’s activities in urban areas would most likely be determined by the composition of the urban community. If a significant component of the community’s membership were also citizens of the host nation, it might play an active role in providing services to these citizens and other Aboriginal people in the urban area. For example, as is evident in Table 7.4, a clear majority (79 per cent) of Aboriginal residents in Halifax are Mi’kmaq, and this city is within the traditional homeland of Mi’kma’ki. These figures suggest there are incentives for the Mi’kmaq Nation to be active in Halifax as a host nation and to accept the Aboriginal community in Halifax as one of its communities. This community could then be recognized as having the same inherent governmental authority as any other Mi’kmaq community. The urban community could elect its own leaders, send representatives to Mi’kmaq Nation meetings and deliver its own programs and services, as in any other recognized Mi’kmaq community.

In situations where few urban residents are affiliated with the host nation, or the community of interest is diverse but has a strong commitment to a form of self-government that accommodates all traditions, there may still be an incentive for a host nation to be active in the urban area. (Vancouver, for example, is home to members of at least 35 nations — Table 7.4).

TABLE 7.4 (part one)  
**Aboriginal Population by Nation of Origin, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991**

First Nation	Halifax		Montreal		Quebec City	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Abenaki	190	5.9				
Algonquian						
Algonquin			205	6.4		
Attikamek					30	2.5
Beaver	35	1.1				

Bella Coola						
Carrier						
Chippewyan						
Coast Tsimshian						
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Halifax</b>		<b>Montreal</b>		<b>Quebec City</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Comox						
Cree			155	4.8		
Dakota			35	1.1		
Delaware						
Dog Rib Rae						
Gitksan						
Haida						
Haisla						
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Halifax</b>		<b>Montreal</b>		<b>Quebec City</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Halkomelem						
Han						
Heilshuk						
Huron-Wendat			370	11.5	590	49.2
Kutchin						
Kwakwa ka'wakw (Kwakiutl)						
Lillooet						
Mi'kmaq	590	79	485	15	95	7.9
Mohawk	50	6.7	1,095	33.9	25	2.1
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Halifax</b>		<b>Montreal</b>		<b>Quebec City</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Montagnais			465	14.4	425	35.4
Nisga'a						
Nootka						
Ojibwa	35	4.7	125	3.9		
Okanagan						
Oneida						
Potawatomi						

Sarcee						
Sechelt						
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Halifax</b>		<b>Montreal</b>		<b>Quebec City</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Sekani						
Shuswap						
Siksika (Blackfoot)			25	0.8		
Slavey						
Straits						
Squamish						
Tahltan						
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Halifax</b>		<b>Montreal</b>		<b>Quebec City</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Thompson						
Tlingit						
Tsilhqot'n (Chilcotin)						
Tutchone						
Wuastukwiuk (Maliseet)						
Other <sup>1</sup>	90	12	75	2.3	45	3.8
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>745</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 7.4 (part two)  
**Aboriginal Population by Nation of Origin, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991**

<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Abenaki	30	1.1	25	0.5			60	3.1
Algonquian								
Algonquin	775	29	80	1.7	55	5.2	115	6
Attikamek								
Beaver								
Bella Coola								

Carrier			50	1.1				
Chippewyan								
Coast Tsimshian								
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Comox								
Cree	315	12	460	9.7	25	2.4	140	7.3
Dakota			45	1				
Delaware			25	0.5				
Dog Rib Rae								
Gitksan								
Haida	45	1.7						
Haisla								
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Halkomelem			40	0.8				
Han								
Heilshuk								
Huron-Wendat	120	4.5	25	0.5				
Kutchin								
Kwakwa ka'wakw (Kwakiutl)								
Lillooet								
Mi'kmaq	265	9.9	245	5.2				
Mohawk	385	14.4	850	17.9	560	52.8	65	3.4
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Montagnais	45	1.7						
Nisga'a			40	0.8				
Nootka								
Ojibwa	460	17	2,615	55	305	28.8	1,479	76.8
Okanagan								
Oneida			105	2.2	55	5.2		
Potawatomi			250	5.3				
Sarcee								

Sechelt									
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>		
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Sekani									
Shuswap									
Siksika (Blackfoot)			30	0.6					
Slavey									
Straits									
Squamish									
Tahltan									
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>Ottawa- Hull</b>		<b>Toronto</b>		<b>St. Catharines/ Niagara</b>		<b>Sudbury</b>		
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Thompson									
Tlingit									
Tsilhqot'n (Chilcotin)									
Tutchone									
Wuastukwiuk (Maliseet)	75	2.8	45	1					
Other <sup>1</sup>	140	5.2	80	1.7	60	5.7	10	0.5	
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2,675</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,755</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,065</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100</b>	

TABLE 7.4 (part three)  
**Aboriginal Population by Nation of Origin, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991**

	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Abenaki								
Algonquian							155	1.5
Algonquin								
Attikamek								
Beaver							75	0.7
Bella Coola								
Carrier							70	0.7

Chippewyan			75	0.5	45	0.8	360	3.5
Coast Tsimshian							45	0.4
	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Comox								
Cree	620	18	3,400	25	3,935	67.3	6,395	63
Dakota			280	2	830	14.2	1,060	10
Delaware								
Dog Rib Rae							30	0.3
Gitksan							35	0.3
Haida							40	0.4
Haisla								
	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Halkomelem					30	0.5		
Han							30	0.3
Heilshuk								
Huron-Wendat								
Kutchin							105	1
Kwakwa ka'wakw (Kwakiutl)								
Lillooet								
Mi'kmaq			30	0.2			50	0.5
	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Mohawk			60	0.4			60	0.6
Montagnais								
Nisga'a								
Nootka								
Ojibwa	2,850	81	9,780	70	845	14.5	985	9.7
Okanagan								
Oneida								
Potawatomi								
Sarcee								

Sechelt								
	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Sekani								
Shuswap							30	0.3
Siksika (Blackfoot)							305	3
Slavey							175	1.7
Straits								
Squamish								
Tahltan								
Thompson								
Tlingit								
	<b>Thunder Bay</b>		<b>Winnipeg</b>		<b>Regina</b>		<b>Edmonton</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Tsilhqot'n (Chilcotin)								
Tutchone								
Wuastukwiuk (Maliseet)								
Other <sup>1</sup>	40	1.1	105	0.8	45	0.8	175	1.7
Total <sup>2</sup>	3,500	100	13,790	100	5,845	100	10,165	100

TABLE 7.4 (part four)  
**Aboriginal Population by Nation of Origin, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas,  
1991**

	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Abenaki								
Algonquian							30	0.3
Algonquin							30	0.3
Attikamek								
Beaver								
Bella Coola							70	0.7

Carrier					60	1.8	340	3.2
Chippewyan	40	0.8	290	9.1			35	0.3
Coast Tsimshian	30	0.6			60	1.8	400	3.8
	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Comox					30	0.9	170	1.6
Cree	1,270	24.9	2,505	78	65	2	1,050	9.8
Dakota	240	4.7	210	6.6			35	0.3
Delaware								
Dog Rib Rae							30	0.3
Gitksan	35	0.7			25	0.8	440	4.1
Haida					45	1.4	435	4.1
Haisla							60	0.6
	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Halkomelem	55	1.1			340	10	1,465	13.7
Han	50	1						
Heilshuk							420	3.9
Huron-Wendat								
Kutchin							30	0.3
Kwakwa ka'wakw (Kwakiutl)					240	7.4	610	5.7
Lillooet							270	2.5
Mi'kmaq	80	1.6					25	0.2
	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>	
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Mohawk	95	1.9			35	1.1	210	2
Montagnais								
Nisga'a					35	1.1	420	3.9
Nootka					370	11	295	2.8
Ojibwa	820	16.1	180	5.6	155	4.8	900	8.4
Okanagan							170	1.6
Oneida								
Potawatomi								



Sarcee	730	14.3							
Sechelt							65	0.6	
	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>		
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Sekani							35	0.3	
Shuswap	65	1.3			70	2.2	305	2.9	
Siksika (Blackfoot)	1,335	26.2					150	1.4	
Slavey							25	0.2	
Straits					1,460	45	130	1.2	
Squamish					80	2.5	1,300	12.2	
Tahltan	25	0.5					60	5.6	
Thompson	25	0.5			45	1.4	330	3.1	
Tlingit							25	0.2	
	<b>Calgary</b>		<b>Prince Albert</b>		<b>Victoria</b>		<b>Vancouver</b>		
<b>First Nation</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Tsilhqot'n (Chilcotin)							45	0.4	
Tutchone							60	0.6	
Wuastukwiuk (Maliseet)									
Other <sup>1</sup>	140	2.8	15	0.5	180	5.5	30	0.3	
Total <sup>2</sup>	5,100	100	3,200	100	3,260	100	10,680	100	

Notes:

1. Unenumerated reserves located in census metropolitan areas are excluded. First Nations with 20 or fewer persons are counted in the 'other' category.

2. Because of rounding, totals may not equal the sum of the figures in the column.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, Custom Tabulations; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, List of Bands by Nation, unpublished, 1991.

The host nation concept is relatively new and underdeveloped. Implementing governance through a host nation could be lengthy and complex. Also, members of other Aboriginal nations living in the host nation's territory might not feel that their aspirations, cultures or values are reflected in the host nation's approach to governance. Further, the host nation approach could increase competition for limited resources between urban Aboriginal people pursuing self-government in different ways and existing urban initiatives in institution building and program and service delivery.

Given these concerns, the host nation approach to self-government should be considered as only one of many ways to include all urban Aboriginal people in a self-government project.

### *Urban Métis Nation governance*

The need for Métis-specific governance institutions, including initiatives in urban areas, was a consistent theme of Métis people's presentations to the Commission. According to the Métis National Council:

The Métis Nation feels strongly that institutions of Métis self-government should be established solely for Métis and categorically rejects approaches to urban self-government which lump Métis into institutions that serve both Indians and Métis.<sup>106</sup>

The urban Métis Nation governance approach would be a component of a broader vision of Métis Nation governance in urban and non-urban areas: a multi-layered system of inter-locking decision-making bodies at local, regional, provincial and national levels. Urban areas would be represented in Métis governments through urban Métis 'locals'. These locals would have authority in defined areas. As a community-level government, they would tailor their governance activities to the priorities and needs of their residents. Thus, urban locals might undertake functions different from those undertaken by their non-urban counterparts.

Urban local presidents would be members of and have voting privileges in the provincial Métis legislatures that have been proposed. This political structure would give urban locals considerable input in Métis government decision making. The Métis approach bodes well for strong local governments, including in urban areas.

Provincial Métis organizations have also developed an extensive network of institutions for program and service delivery in housing, economic development, education, and child and family services. These institutions would likely continue to serve urban Métis communities. Because of their representation in provincial-level Métis government structures, urban (and other) locals would have direct input into the overall management of these affiliated institutions.

In summary, Métis local self-governing bodies, both on and off a land base, would have a broad area of responsibility, including education, training and employment, housing, social services, justice, health and economic development. They would either deliver programs and services organized at the provincial or regional level of Métis government, working through existing or emerging institutions, or would develop their own programs and services.

Métis Nation governance in urban areas has at least two strengths: first, to a group of Aboriginal people who have been dispossessed historically, it would give access to self-government in a way that ensures their culture and goals will not be overwhelmed by Aboriginal groups with other agendas and histories. Second, it has considerable support

among Métis organizations already. However, like other nation-based approaches to urban governance, Métis initiatives must also meet the particular needs and interests of urban residents and ensure that they are adequately represented in provincial and national governance structures.

### *Urban treaty nation governance*

Under the urban treaty nation governance approach, treaty entitlements or services would be provided through administration centres to citizens of treaty nations living in urban areas. These centres would provide a range of programs and services under one roof. They would likely have an associated governance structure — for example, an executive body or board of directors, including representation from participating treaty nations.

Treaty service administration centres could be organized and operated by several nations that are party to the same treaty or by nations party to different treaties. The precise nature of these arrangements could be determined by urban demographics and the representation of different treaty groups in urban centres. For example, as is evident in Table 7.5, in Regina, 68.4 per cent of the registered Indian population are beneficiaries of Treaty 4. The nations of origin of these treaty beneficiaries might join together to establish a Treaty 4 administration centre. In Winnipeg, where almost 25 per cent of the population are beneficiaries of Treaty 1 and the rest of the treaty population are beneficiaries of other treaties, it might make more sense to establish a centre operating under the auspices of several treaty nations. These treaty centres would operate under the joint authority of participating treaty nations.

TABLE 7.5

**Registered Indian Population by Treaty Status, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991**

Treaty Status <sup>1</sup>	Halifax		Toronto		Winnipeg		Regina	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Mi'kmaq <sup>2</sup>	590	71						
Williams <sup>3</sup>			545	9.5				
Robinson-Huron								
Robinson-Superior								
Treaty 1					3,885	24.8		
Treaty 4							4,470	68.4
Treaty 6								
Treaty 7								
Other treaty <sup>4</sup>	160	19	3,885	68.2	9,465	60.4	950	14.5

Non-treaty <sup>5</sup>	15	1.8	330	5.8	380	2.4	310	4.7
Band membership not stated <sup>6</sup>	70	8.3	940	16.5	1,945	12.4	810	12.4
Total	835	100	5,700	100	15,675	100	6,540	100

**TABLE 7.5**  
**Registered Indian Population by Treaty Status, Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991 (continued)**

Treaty Status <sup>1</sup>	Edmonton		Calgary		Vancouver	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Mi'kmaq <sup>2</sup>						
Williams <sup>3</sup>						
Robinson-Huron						
Robinson-Superior						
Treaty 1						
Treaty 4						
Treaty 6	4,065	34.2				
Treaty 7			2,140	38.5		
Other treaty <sup>4</sup>	5,535	46.6	2,380	42.8	2,610	21.3
Non-treaty <sup>5</sup>	580	5	515	9.3	7,890	64.2
Band membership not stated <sup>6</sup>	1,685	14.2	530	9.5	1,780	14.5
Total	11,865	100	5,565	100	12,280	100

Notes: Persons reporting a band/First Nation that falls within a census metropolitan treaty area were included in counts for Mi'kmaq, Williams treaties, etc., as appropriate.

1. People who reported a band/First Nation, but who were not registered: Halifax, 15; Toronto, 255; Winnipeg, 65; Regina, 25; Edmonton, 135; Calgary, 25; Vancouver, 210.

2. Mi'kmaq = Pre-Confederation treaty.

3. Includes persons in Toronto from the Beausoleil Band and the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

4. 'Other treaty' refers to persons who reported a band/First Nation whose treaty lies outside the census metropolitan area in question.

5. 'Non-treaty' refers to bands/First Nations that do not have a treaty.

6. Persons who stated that they were registered under the Indian Act but who did not report a band/First Nation on the census questionnaire.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, catalogue no. 94-327, 1991 Aboriginal Data Users' Guide, and custom tabulations; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, List of Bands by Treaty, unpublished, 1991.

This approach recognizes the portability of treaty rights and the connection that many urban treaty people wish to maintain with their nations of origin. Concentrating program and service delivery arrangements in one agency could potentially eliminate inefficiencies associated with fragmented and uncoordinated service delivery. It would also expose patterns in how the federal government meets its responsibilities to urban treaty people. The shortcomings of the urban treaty centres approach are similar to those for other nation-based approaches: accountability of nation governments to urban citizens and administrative complexity where several nations are involved.

Approaches to governance based on nations of origin may not meet the needs of Aboriginal people in urban areas for a variety of reasons. Some urban Aboriginal people have become estranged from their nations of origin. This was strongly emphasized in submissions from Aboriginal women. Participants at the Commission's round table stated, for example, that "Aboriginal organizations claim to represent Aboriginal urban people but involve little accountability and almost no voice for Aboriginal urban people".<sup>107</sup> Urban Aboriginal residents may identify with their city or town rather than with a nation of origin. This was particularly clear in submissions from Aboriginal youth living in cities.

The Commission is concerned that implementing nation-based urban governments could cause division in these communities or displace the efforts of many urban Aboriginal people to create communities that respect and accommodate all Aboriginal identities, cultures, values and priorities. Moreover, reconstitution of the nations on which these models rest may itself be a long and challenging process. Some nations will require time and resources to reorganize themselves and to heal divisions between urban and non-urban citizens. Therefore, nation-based approaches should be seen as a longer-term objective. It is nevertheless clear that urban governance initiatives such as those of the Métis Nation and the Siksika Nation are well on the road to implementation and should be fully supported by governments. We also recognize that many Aboriginal nations strongly reject approaches to governance that are pan-Aboriginal. In these situations, nation-based approaches may represent the only acceptable option for urban self-government.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **4.7.23**

Nation-based urban governance initiatives be pursued by nations when they have sufficient capacity to assume governance responsibility for the needs and interests of urban Aboriginal citizens.

### **4.7.24**

The urban citizens of Aboriginal nations be fully consulted and participate in decisions concerning urban governance initiatives pursued by nations.

#### **4.7.25**

Aboriginal nations ensure that their urban citizens' needs and interests are recognized and that mechanisms are instituted to ensure they are represented in the political structures and decision-making processes of the nation.

#### **4.7.26**

Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments give full support to Aboriginal nations when they develop and implement urban governance initiatives.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

There are many ways to improve the circumstances of urban Aboriginal people through urban governance arrangements. Recognizing and responding to self-government aspirations and improving the approach of Canadian governments and institutions to matters of primary concern to urban Aboriginal people will substantially improve the vitality and future of Canadian cities and towns.

Urban self-government arrangements are also essential tools for formulating new relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. As Aboriginal people living in cities become more involved in government decision making, acquire a greater ability to effect change in areas with a direct impact on their lives, and gain the capacity to institute fundamental, forward looking reforms, old stereotypes will disappear. Whatever form urban self-government takes, we are confident that it will go forward in an orderly and reasonable manner while meeting the needs and expectations of urban Aboriginal people. A vital part of this process will be for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments to support education and healing among urban residents to ensure their meaningful participation in governance initiatives and to provide information about choices, options and decisions on governance. We address the issue of public education in greater depth in Volume 5, Chapter 4.

## **6. Urban Demographics and Socio-Economic Conditions**

Until recently, information on Aboriginal people living in cities has been scarce. Census counts of Aboriginal populations have been based on questions about ethnic origins and ancestry, with varying definitions of origin and instructions for Aboriginal respondents.<sup>108</sup> Even these data are of limited use in establishing needs and planning services and self-government for Aboriginal peoples, because origin and ancestry provide little information about the potential demand for culturally adapted services and the desire to participate in Aboriginal institutions; the real key is how individuals identify themselves.

### **6.1 Aboriginal Peoples Survey**

In 1991, Statistics Canada conducted a national post-census survey of Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) was based on self-identification rather than ancestry,<sup>109</sup> but continued to reflect the urban/rural/reserve distinction traditionally employed in official statistics. This distinction was created and reinforced by policies of non-Aboriginal governments and ignores the fact that many Aboriginal people living in urban areas retain strong ties to their communities of origin.<sup>110</sup> These ties are important in exploring the demographic framework for self-government approaches based on citizenship or governance of traditional territories. Ultimately, data collected to support research in this area should not be organized in a way that perpetuates culturally inappropriate distinctions. Although some information on the diversity of urban Aboriginal residents can be gleaned from the 1991 census, the geography used in this chapter is of necessity based on Statistics Canada's standard urban/rural/reserve categorization.

## 6.2 Population Size and Dynamics

### *Current urban population size*

The APS estimated the total 1991 Aboriginal population (First Nations, Inuit and Métis people) at 720,000. Almost two-thirds, or 466,100, resided off-reserve. Approximately 320,000 people, 44.4 per cent of the total Aboriginal population, lived in urban areas (Table 7.6).

TABLE 7.6  
**Residence of Adjusted Aboriginal Identity Population, 1991**

	Total Aboriginal		Registered NAI		Non-Registered NAI		Métis		Inuit <sup>1</sup>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
On-reserve	254,600	35	254,600	58	— <sup>2</sup>		—		—	
Off-reserve	466,100	65	183,500	42	112,600	100	139,400	100	35,600	100
Total <sup>3</sup>	720,600	100	438,000	100	112,600	100	139,400	100	37,800	100
Urban	320,000	44	148,500	34	77,800	69	90,100	65	7,900	22
Rural	146,100	20	35,000	8	34,900	31	49,300	35	27,700	78

Notes:

NAI = North American Indian.

As a result of multiple Aboriginal group identity responses, the sum of on-reserve and off-reserve populations may be greater than the number in the total column.

Urban is defined as a population of at least 1,000 with a density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre. The urban and rural counts do not include reserves.

Because of rounding, the totals may not equal the sum of the column figures.

1. 95,000 added to the aps count to compensate for the population on unenumerated reserves and undercoverage in participating reserve and non-reserve areas.
2. Actual aps counts for non-status Indians, Métis people and Inuit living on reserves were 3,600 (3.5%), 4,535 (3.4%) and 620 (1.7%) respectively. Because of the small numbers, these were added to non-reserve counts.
3. Non-reserve, urban and rural, adjusted counts for Inuit were derived by applying the percentage of urban and rural Inuit from the aps actual counts to the total adjusted Inuit count.

*Source:* M.J. Norris et al., "Projections of Canada's Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016", research study prepared for RCAP (February 1995).

Among the major Aboriginal groups, registered (status) Indians are the most numerous urban residents (148,500), followed by Métis people (90,100), non-status Indians (77,800) and Inuit (7,900). As a proportion of each group, however, non-status Indians are most heavily urban-based (69 per cent), followed closely by Métis people (65 per cent), then registered Indians (34 per cent) and Inuit (22 per cent) (see Table 7.6).

### ***Migration***

The APS collected data that enable migration patterns to be measured over the five-year period 1986-1991 for four geographic locations: reserves; rural non-reserve areas; census metropolitan areas (CMAs), urban areas with populations over 100,000; and urban non-CMAs, with populations between 1,000 and 100,000.<sup>111</sup>

Urban CMAs were net gainers of migrants between 1986 and 1991, while urban non-CMAs and rural non-reserve areas were net losers. Reserves also showed a net migration gain that was higher in absolute numbers than the urban CMAs. Analysis of migration flows between each type of location shows that urban CMAs gained Aboriginal population from smaller urban centres and from rural non-reserve areas, but experienced a net loss to reserves. However, a significant percentage (20 per cent) of the flow to reserves was composed of new registrants under Bill C-31. Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon had a higher percentage of in-migration from reserves and rural areas (combined) than eastern and western CMAs, including Calgary and Edmonton, whose major source of new arrivals was other CMAs.

Net migration patterns differed from one Aboriginal group to another. Registered Indians constituted the largest net gain for reserves, with CMAs following at the expense of smaller urban centres and rural areas. Although non-status Indians accounted for the majority of Aboriginal migrants to Vancouver, Victoria and eastern CMAs, there was also a significant movement of non-registered Indians from CMAs to rural areas, resulting in a large net increase in the non-registered Indian population in rural areas and a small increase on reserves and in large urban areas. Among Métis people, CMAs showed the largest net gain, mostly from smaller urban centres. Métis people constituted between nearly one-quarter and one-third of migrants into every CMA from Winnipeg to Edmonton. Rural areas also experienced a net Métis migration originating from CMAs and from smaller urban centres. Finally, there was a very small outflow of Inuit from rural areas, largely northern communities, to small urban centres and CMAs.



Overall, urban centres with populations over 100,000 experienced a net migration gain from every Aboriginal group, while smaller urban centres had a net outflow from every group except Inuit, who had a small net inflow. Although rural areas showed a net loss of migrants, there was significant urban to rural migration among Métis people and non-registered Indians.

Finally, even though net migration to urban areas is relatively small in absolute numbers, 29 per cent of the total urban Aboriginal population in 1991 were recent in-migrants from other urban and rural areas and from reserves. This has important implications for housing, education, employment, training, and the types of services available to deliver appropriate assistance.

### *Projections*

Except for the five-year migration pattern data derived from the APS, there is very little information on historical urbanization trends among Aboriginal people. However, data derived from a study prepared for the Commission indicate that the Aboriginal population residing in urban areas grew by 55 per cent over those 10 years. The non-Aboriginal urban population grew by approximately 11 per cent over the same period.<sup>112</sup>

Given migration patterns in urban areas between 1986 and 1991, it seems likely that natural increase has become a more important component of growth in the number of urban Aboriginal people than net migration. Another source of increase may be people who never identified themselves as Aboriginal before 1985 but who began to do so following passage of Bill C-31. Many of the 80,000 to 90,000 C-31 registrants were living in urban areas.

The total Aboriginal population can be expected to grow from about 720,000 in 1991 to more than a million by the year 2016, assuming that mortality rates will decline slowly and fertility rates continue a more rapid decline over the projection period. Taking into account recent trends in migration patterns and natural increase, the Aboriginal population in urban areas can be expected to grow by 43 per cent, reaching almost 457,000 by 2016. As a relative share of the total Aboriginal population, however, it is expected to decline slightly, from 44 per cent in 1991 to 42 per cent in 2016.

## **6.3 Composition of Urban Aboriginal Populations**

The scope of institutional development in a particular location will necessarily be affected by the size of local Aboriginal populations. It will also reflect the diverse situation of urban Aboriginal residents with regard to current access to government funding and programs and aspirations for self-government.

### *Ancestry and identity*

Ancestry and self-identification are not coincident among Aboriginal people in urban areas. In 11 CMAs studied, the percentage of people with Aboriginal ancestry who also

identified with an Aboriginal group varied from 15.2 per cent in Montreal to 86.3 per cent in Regina (see Table 7.7). The size of the 'identity' population reflects changes in patterns of self-identification. Among the

CMA's studied, Montreal, Halifax, Ottawa-Hull, Toronto and Victoria all contain a relatively high proportion of people with Aboriginal ancestry who do not currently identify themselves as Aboriginal people.

TABLE 7.7

**Aboriginal Ancestry and Aboriginal Identity in Selected Census Metropolitan Areas, 1991**

	Population With Aboriginal Ancestry <sup>1</sup>	Ancestry Population Identifying as Aboriginal	% of Cma Population Identifying as Aboriginal
	#	%	%
Halifax	6,710	17.7	0.4
Montreal	44,645	15.2	0.2
Ottawa-Hull	30,890	22.4	0.8
Toronto	40,040	35.5	0.4
Winnipeg	44,970	78.2	5.4
Regina	12,765	86.3	5.8
Saskatoon	14,225	83.8	5.7
Calgary	24,375	57.7	1.9
Edmonton	42,695	68.5	3.5
Vancouver	42,795	58.5	1.6
Victoria	10,215	43.4	1.6

Notes:

Cma = Census Metropolitan Area.

1. Includes people who identified single and multiple ethnic or cultural origins.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, catalogue no. 94-327.

**North American Indians**

To pursue Aboriginal governance, social and economic development, and service delivery in an urban environment, the composition of First Nations populations must be understood in the context of their legal status, band membership, and treaty and nation affiliations. Band membership, for example, entails certain rights and privileges such as voting in band elections, voting on issues within the jurisdiction of the band council, and voting on the right to reside on the reserve.

North American Indians who are registered (status) Indians under the Indian Act are the largest group of Aboriginal urban residents (see Table 7.6). The 50,490 Indians living in urban areas who were reinstated under Bill C-31 make up more than one-third of this group.

In many CMAs, the vast majority of the registered Indian population are band members. Some, however, did not report a band or First Nation membership. The highest number of these was in Winnipeg (1,945), followed by Vancouver, Edmonton and Ottawa-Hull.

The distribution of treaty and nation affiliation in urban areas could have a significant impact on approaches to self-government. The treaty affiliations of First Nations residents of 10 selected urban areas showed no consistent pattern (see Table 7.5). In four areas (Halifax, Sudbury, Regina and Prince Albert), a majority of First Nations residents belonged to the bands whose treaty territory included the city. In four other areas (Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Calgary), the percentage ranged between 25 and 43. In Vancouver, at the other extreme, 64 per cent of First Nations residents reported non-treaty band or First Nation affiliation, reflecting the general absence of treaties in British Columbia.

The distribution of nations of origin also varied considerably among urban areas (see Table 7.4). First Nations residents of Halifax are predominantly Mi'kmaq. Regina and Edmonton have a majority of Cree Nation people. Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg and Toronto are mostly Ojibwa. Other large cities, such as Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary, have a greater mix of nations of origin.

### Métis people

Métis people represent 28 per cent (about 90,000) of urban Aboriginal residents. The proportion of Aboriginal people identifying themselves as Métis people ranges from 10.1 per cent in Toronto to 46.9 per cent in Saskatoon, with actual numbers ranging from 345 in Victoria to 13,515 in Edmonton. Although prairie cities report the highest numbers and proportion of Métis residents, there are a significant number in eastern cities and in British Columbia.

### Non-status Indians

The estimated 78,000 North American Indians not registered under the Indian Act residing in urban areas in 1991 (see Table 7.6) made up about 24 per cent of the total urban Aboriginal population. Little is known about their affiliation with a community of origin; in the 1991 census, few non-status Indians reported band or First Nation membership or affiliation. Although the impact of this substantial group on self-government issues, economic and social development, and service delivery may not be evident, it clearly constitutes yet another heterogeneous element in the composition of Aboriginal peoples in urban areas.

### Inuit

About 8,400 Inuit were estimated to be living in urban areas in 1991, representing 2.6 per cent of the total urban Aboriginal population. Only 1,850 were reported residing in CMAs, with the remainder in northern centres such as Yellowknife, Iqaluit and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

## **6.4 Demographic, Social and Economic Conditions**

The 1991 APS collected data on a variety of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. While the data highlight the poverty of much of the urban Aboriginal population, this population is not homogeneous, and Aboriginal people are represented at all socio-economic levels. The plight of many, however, is serious. (Unless otherwise specified, the socio-economic data presented here are based on the APS counts, without adjustment for undercoverage, because information is not available on the socio-economic characteristics of the unenumerated population.)

### ***Sex***

The over-representation of women among urban Aboriginal residents has been a long-standing pattern. By 1991, 56 per cent of registered North American Indians in urban areas were women; among non-status Indians and Métis people in urban areas, 52 per cent were women (see Table 7.1). Only Inuit had more men than women in urban areas.

Part of the reason for the predominance of women among urban Aboriginal residents lies in their reasons for moving to non-reserve locations, which tend to be related to housing and family considerations rather than economic factors. Other research suggests that women are more likely to move to urban areas as heads of families and require different kinds of services than men, who are more likely to migrate as 'unattached' individuals.<sup>113</sup>

### ***Age***

Aboriginal people residing in urban areas are considerably younger than the general urban population (see Table 7.1). Thirty-seven per cent of women are under 15, compared to 20 per cent in the non-Aboriginal population. The difference continues into the 15-24 age group, which constitutes 20 per cent of urban female Aboriginal residents but only 14 per cent of non-Aboriginal women. And only five per cent of female Aboriginal residents are over 55, compared to 20 per cent of the non-Aboriginal urban population.

### ***Use of Aboriginal languages***

Many participants in the Commission's hearings expressed strong concern about the loss of Aboriginal cultures and languages. These concerns are borne out by data gathered for the APS (see Table 7.1, as well as Volume 3, Chapters 5 and 6). Only about 18 per cent of urban Aboriginal people aged 15 and over reported being able to speak an Aboriginal language; for Métis people and non-status Indians, this number fell to 11 per cent and 5.6

per cent respectively. Almost three-quarters of urban residents who had never spoken an Aboriginal language expressed a desire to learn one.

### *Education*

APS data show that the urban Aboriginal population is generally less well educated than non-Aboriginal residents (see Table 7.1). Even though the percentage of the urban Aboriginal population holding a university degree is two to four times higher than the reserve and rural population, it amounts to only about four per cent, compared to 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal urban residents. A significant gap remains with regard to high school or trades certificates, which are held by 13 per cent of the urban Aboriginal population and almost 19 per cent of non-Aboriginal residents. Only among holders of post-secondary non-university certificates and diplomas does the difference narrow, to 15 per cent of Aboriginal residents and 16 per cent of non-Aboriginal residents.

### *Labour force characteristics*

Early research on urban Aboriginal people assumed that over time they would be integrated into the labour force and benefit from economic mobility. These assumptions were challenged by studies in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrating the difficulty of achieving economic success in urban environments and undermining the notion that time and increasing familiarity with the city would facilitate urban Aboriginal residents' integration into the labour market.<sup>114</sup>

By 1991, Aboriginal labour force participation rates were approaching those of non-Aboriginal people in urban areas. However, unemployment rates were more than twice as high for Aboriginal people (see Table 7.1).

There is considerable variation between CMAs and between different aboriginal groups in particular CMAs regarding both participation and unemployment rates. Nevertheless, the aggregate figures suggest there is little reason to be optimistic about the employment situation of Aboriginal people in urban areas. The substantial variations between urban areas and Aboriginal groups also suggest that employment initiatives should be locally targeted.

### *Income*

In light of the labour force situation of many urban Aboriginal residents, it is not surprising that their average annual incomes (from all sources) lagged fully 33 per cent behind those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (see Table 7.1). The average total annual income for Aboriginal people was \$16,560, compared to \$24,876 for non-Aboriginal residents.

Aboriginal people no longer attending school and working for 40 or more weeks a year fare considerably better in urban areas than on reserves or in rural areas. Aboriginal CMA residents earned on average \$25,375 per year, while reserve residents earned \$20,109.

Nevertheless, the income gap with comparable non-Aboriginal urban residents persisted; the latter had an average annual income of \$34,602, more than 36 per cent higher than their Aboriginal counterparts.

### ***Poverty***

The incidence of poverty is very high among Aboriginal people residing in urban areas. Thirty-five per cent received less than \$10,000 per year in income from all sources, compared to 26 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population (see Table 7.1).

The picture becomes worse when measured against the 'poverty line', or low income cut-off, defined by Statistics Canada. On the basis of 1991 census data for Aboriginal household incomes in selected CMAs, Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon reported more than 60 per cent of Aboriginal households below the low income cut-off. The situation was even more serious among female single-parent households in these cities, where between 80 and 90 per cent were below the poverty line. In other CMAs, between 40 and 76 per cent of these households fell below the poverty line.<sup>115</sup>

### ***Housing***

A study conducted for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to determine whether urban Aboriginal households were in 'core need' developed an index to measure the adequacy, suitability and affordability of housing units.<sup>116</sup> It found that in 1991, 33 per cent of urban area Aboriginal households were in core need, compared to 17 per cent of non-Aboriginal households.

The most prevalent problem was shelter affordability, with all CMAs from Winnipeg to Victoria reporting shelter costs exceeding 30 per cent of household income in about four of 10 Aboriginal households. At least eight of 11 CMAs reported that 60 per cent or more of female single-parent households had shelter costs exceeding this affordability index. In fact, single-parent families represented almost one-third of Aboriginal households with an affordability problem, with single-person households also accounting for one-third, and two-parent households with children constituting a further 18 per cent.

### ***Comparative characteristics of migrants and non-migrants***

#### **Sex**

Women dominated the 1986-1991 migration streams into all areas, especially urban areas where they represented about 58 per cent of all migrants (see Table 7.2). The APS also found that one woman in five living in urban areas had moved during the 12 months before the survey.

#### **Reasons for moving**

While the Clatworthy study did not explore reasons for moving to urban areas specifically, it did examine reasons for migrating to non-reserve areas generally (see Table 7.3). More than 30 per cent of migrants said they moved for family-related reasons. Access to employment and improved housing were each cited by 20 per cent. Eight per cent cited 'community factors', and five per cent said they were forced to move.

The percentage of women citing community factors was far higher than men, while the proportion citing access to employment was significantly lower. More women than men apparently moved for non-economic reasons. This finding is consistent with the economic condition of Aboriginal women who migrated to CMAs.

### Family status

Spouses and single parents constituted more than 48 per cent of all migrants, with children making up another 35 per cent.<sup>117</sup> Single-parent families accounted for 12 per cent of the population migrating to CMAs from 1986 to 1991. 'Unattached' individuals constituted 16 per cent of all migrants and 19 per cent of those migrating into CMAs. The proportion of children was smaller among migrants than among non-migrants, suggesting that migrant families tend to move at an earlier stage of the family formation cycle.

### Socio-economic characteristics

Sixty-two per cent of migrants to CMAs had a secondary school certificate or post-secondary schooling, compared to 50 per cent of non-migrants and 66 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.<sup>118</sup> In smaller urban areas, only about 55 per cent of migrants and 35 per cent of non-migrants had a secondary school certificate or more.

Both male and female migrants to urban areas tend to be more active participants in the labour force than their non-migrant counterparts. In CMAs, non-migrants and female migrants participated in the labour force at the same rate as non-Aboriginal residents, while male Aboriginal migrants had a higher participation rate. Migrants, however, did not fare as well as non-migrants: both male and female migrants had higher unemployment rates. Moreover, the unemployment rates of urban Aboriginal residents were generally two and a half times higher than those of the non-Aboriginal population.

Aboriginal migrants who were out of school and working full-time in CMAs had slightly higher average employment income than non-migrants, but it was still more than 26 per cent lower than that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

The desperate economic conditions facing single-parent Aboriginal women were even worse among migrants to CMAs. In nine of 11 CMAs, more than 60 per cent of migrant female single-parent families were living below the poverty line. The situation was scarcely better for two-parent migrant families in Regina and Saskatoon, as many as 50 per cent of whom were below Statistics Canada's low income cut-off.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In this section we have used the available data to describe the key demographic, social and economic conditions of Aboriginal people living in urban areas, with particular emphasis on metropolitan areas.

Demographically, the urban Aboriginal population experienced very rapid growth between 1981 and 1991, increasing by 55 per cent (compared to an 11 per cent increase in urban non-Aboriginal residents). Although the future rate of growth is expected to be slower than in 1981-1991, the urban Aboriginal population is still expected to grow by 43 per cent in the next 25 years, from 320,000 in 1991 to 457,000 in 2016. It is vital for policy and programming purposes to remember that urban residents constituted 44 per cent of the total Aboriginal population in 1991.

Another major feature of the urban Aboriginal population is its diversity. This will have a significant impact on forms of urban self-government, institutions and service delivery vehicles. In particular, it is not clear how urban Aboriginal residents will identify themselves in the future and how they will organize for self-government purposes. The Commission is concerned that relevant information be collected and made a number of recommendations in this regard in Volume 2, Chapter 3.

Finally, the information presented in this section highlights the poverty, high dependency ratios and disadvantaged labour market position of urban Aboriginal residents and the particular plight of Aboriginal women living in urban areas. At the same time, socio-economic characteristics do vary widely between urban areas, so that Aboriginal people in different areas have distinct needs and priorities. Their aspirations and capacity to consider and implement self-government will also differ.

These factors suggest that while some initiatives should focus on providing immediate relief, others require more long-term planning and implementation strategies. The varying capacity of urban Aboriginal populations also suggests that information, strategies and experience relating to governance should be shared so that each community is not required to bear the entire burden of developing its own approaches to self-government and the provision of services.

## **7. Conclusion**

Aboriginal people living in urban areas face many challenges, not the least of which is maintaining their cultural identity as Aboriginal people. Some become trapped between two worlds — unable to find a place in either their Aboriginal culture or the culture of the dominant society. Others find ways to bridge the gap, to remain firmly grounded in traditional values while living and working in an urban milieu. In this chapter we examined ways to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal identity in urban areas.

The influx of Aboriginal people into Canadian cities is a relatively recent phenomenon. Government policy, which was originally developed mainly to deal with Aboriginal people living in Aboriginal communities, has not kept pace. Policy has developed in a piecemeal, uncoordinated fashion, leaving gaps and disputes over jurisdiction and



responsibility. Urban Aboriginal people have felt the effects socially — through unemployment, low wages and the like — and culturally, through systemic racism and a weakening or erasing of Aboriginal identity. The combination can be deadly. We have proposed a number of recommendations aimed at resolving jurisdictional confusion and fostering a sound, co-ordinated approach to urban Aboriginal policy. We have done so largely by listening to the testimony and ideas of urban Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people want urban institutions that reflect Aboriginal values. As we have seen, this often means creating or strengthening Aboriginally controlled institutions. Urban Aboriginal people also want to be able to practise their culture and traditions in the urban setting. And like Aboriginal people everywhere, urban Aboriginal people are seeking self-determination. We have detailed a number of ways self-governance can operate in urban areas.

Territory, land and home have always been important to Aboriginal people. Those living in urban Canada are no different. For some, the land that lies beneath the concrete is their territory. Others choose to leave their homeland for a variety of reasons, be it education, employment or opportunity. Whatever the case, there is no need for Aboriginal people to shed their identity at the city limits. Identity is more than skin deep. It is in the blood, the heart and the mind, Aboriginal people told us; you carry it with you wherever you go.

## **Notes:**

\* Transcripts of the Commission's hearings are cited with the speaker's name and affiliation, if any, and the location and date of the hearing. See A Note About Sources at the beginning of this volume for information about transcripts and other Commission publications.

**1** Larry Krotz, *Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1980), pp. 10-11.

**2** Native Council of Canada, *Decision 1992: Background and Discussion Points for the First Peoples Forums* (Ottawa: 1992), p. 10.

**3** See, in general, Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

**4** Debi Spence, "Rebuilding the Spirit of the Urban Aboriginal Under Class: Leading Aboriginal People to Self-Government", brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP] (1993), p. 9. For information about briefs submitted to RCAP, see A Note About Sources at the beginning of this volume.

**5** A low income cut-off (LICO) represents the amount of income needed for basic necessities (and all other income is disposable). LICOs vary by family size, degree of urbanization and geographic location. The figures are updated yearly based on changes in the consumer price index.

**6** John W. Berry, “Aboriginal Cultural Identity”, research study prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993). For information about research studies prepared for RCAP, see A Note About Sources at the beginning of this volume.

**7** Two-day learning circles were held in Victoria (two sessions); Inuvik, Northwest Territories (two sessions); Saskatoon; Winnipeg (two sessions); Quebec City; and Halifax (two sessions). The results are summarized in Kathleen E. Absolon and R. Anthony Winchester, “Cultural Identity for Urban Aboriginal Peoples: Learning Circles Synthesis Report”, research study prepared for RCAP (1994).

**8** Etah, a 17-year-old street youth in Vancouver, quoted in Lauri Gilchrist and R. Anthony Winchester, “Kāptitipis e-pimohteyahk (Urban Perspectives: Aboriginal Street Youth Study): Vancouver, Winnipeg and Montreal”, research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

**9** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (cited in note 7).

**10** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Inuvik).

**11** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Quebec City).

**12** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Inuvik).

**13** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Winnipeg).

**14** Aboriginal Youth Council of Canada, “Aboriginal Youth in Crisis”, brief submitted to RCAP (1993), p. 24.

**15** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Halifax) (cited in note 7).

**16** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Saskatoon).

**17** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Halifax).

**18** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Victoria).

**19** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Saskatoon).

**20** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (Victoria and Winnipeg).

- 21** Kathleen E. Absolon and R. Anthony Winchester, “Urban Perspectives Cultural Identity Project, Victoria Report: Case Studies of ‘Sonny’ and ‘Emma’”, research study prepared for RCAP (1994).
- 22** Ian Chapman and Don McCaskill, *The Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres: Case Studies on Native Management* (Peterborough: Native Management and Economic Development Program, Trent University, 1990).
- 23** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (cited in note 7) (Saskatoon).
- 24** Absolon and Winchester, “Urban Perspectives” (cited in note 21).
- 25** RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres*, Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1993), p. 17.
- 26** Re Term “Indians”, [1939] 1 S.C.R. 104 at 121; and [1939] 2 D.L.R. 417 at 433.
- 27** See Bradford W. Morse and John Giokas, “Do the Métis Fall Within Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867?”, in *Aboriginal Self-Government: Legal and Constitutional Issues* (Ottawa: RCAP, 1995), p. 140.
- 28** Robert Mitchell, attorney general and minister responsible for Saskatchewan’s Indian and Métis affairs secretariat, “Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples” (11 May 1993), p. 5.
- 29** Bradford W. Morse, “Government Obligations, Aboriginal Peoples and Section 91(24)”, in David Hawkes, ed., *Aboriginal Peoples and Government Responsibility: Exploring Federal and Provincial Roles* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), p. 71.
- 30** Mitchell, “Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan” (cited in note 28), pp. 5-6.
- 31** See *R. v. Dick*, [1985] 2 S.C.R. 309 at 326-28; *R. v. Kruger*, [1978] 1 S.C.R. 104 at 115; and *R. v. Alphonse*, [1993] 5 W.W.R. 401 at 415-417 (B.C.C.A.).
- 32** See the cases cited in note 31. See also *Four B Manufacturing v. United Garment Workers of America and Ontario Labour Relations Board*, [1980] 1 S.C.R. 1031 at 1048; Douglas Sanders, “The Constitution, the Provinces and Aboriginal Peoples”, in J. Anthony Long, Menno Boldt, Leroy Little Bear, eds., *Governments in Conflict? Provinces and Indian Nations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 155-156; and Patrick Macklem, “First Nations Self-Government and the Borders of the Canadian Legal Imagination” (1991) 36 McGill L.J. 382.
- 33** *Natural Parents v. Superintendent of Child Welfare* (1975), 60 D.L.R. (3rd series) 148; and *Four B Manufacturing* (cited in note 32).

**34** Mitchell v. Peguis Indian Band, [1990] 2 S.C.R. 85 per Dickson C.J.C. at 109; see also RCAP, *Partners in Confederation: Aboriginal Peoples, Self-Government, and the Constitution* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1993), p. 33.

**35** The Ontario government strategy is based on the final report of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee, *For Generations to Come: The Time is Now* (September 1993); and Ontario Ministry of Health, *New Directions: Aboriginal Health Policy for Ontario* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1994).

**36** See Morse, "Government Obligations" (cited in note 29), pp. 71-72. One significant exception to this general rule was the establishment in 1938 of 12 Métis settlements in Alberta, which provided a land base and mechanisms for local self-government to many Métis and non-status Indians residing in Alberta. See *The Metis Population Betterment Act, 1940, S.A. 1940, c. 6*. Currently, there are eight Métis settlements.

**37** See Report of the [Ontario] Social Assistance Review Committee, *Transitions* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1988); First Nations' Project Team Report, *Social Assistance Legislation Review* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1992); K.A. (Kim) Scott, "Funding Policy for Indigenous Human Services", in RCAP, *The Path to Healing: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Health and Social Issues* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1993), pp. 90-107.

**38** Alberta Health, *Strengthening the Circle: What Aboriginal Albertans Say About Their Health* (Edmonton: 1995), p. 5.

**39** Sanders, "The Constitution, the Provinces and Aboriginal Peoples" (cited in note 32), pp. 160-162.

**40** See First Nations Circle on the Constitution, *Commissioners' Report, To The Source* (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 1992).

**41** See RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25).

**42** Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings, No. 1* (26 November 1992) at 5.

**43** Mitchell, "Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan" (cited in note 28), p. 5.

**44** See Glenn Drover and Allan Moscovitch, "Inequality and Social Welfare", in Allan Moscovitch and Glenn Drover, eds., *Inequality: Essays on the Political Economy of Social Welfare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

**45** John H. Hylton, "The Case for Aboriginal Self-Government: A Social Policy Perspective", in John H. Hylton, ed., *Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1994), p. 36; and John

D. O'Neil, "Aboriginal Health Policy for the Next Century", in RCAP, *The Path to Healing* (cited in note 37), pp. 30-34.

**46** For example, "67 per cent of First Nations in Ontario (representing 54 per cent of the reserve population) have persistently experienced social assistance dependency rates above 20 per cent---for the past twenty years." See First Nations' Project Team Report, *Social Assistance Legislation Review* (cited in note 37).

**47** See, generally, David C. Hawkes and Allan M. Maslove, "Fiscal Arrangements for Aboriginal Self-Government", in D.C. Hawkes, ed., *Aboriginal Peoples and Government Responsibility: Exploring Federal and Provincial Roles* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), pp. 93-138; and Robin Boadway, *The Constitutional Division of Powers: An Economic Perspective*, study prepared for the Economic Council of Canada (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1992).

**48** R.S.C. 1985, c. 6, ss. 8-13.

**49** See *Finlay v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, [1993] 1 S.C.R. 1080; and Margot E. Young, "Starving in the Shadow of the Law: A Comment on *Finlay v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*", *Constitutional Forum* 5/2 (Winter 1994), p. 31.

**50** Calculated from data in Thomas J. Courchene, *Social Canada in the Millennium: Reform Imperatives and Restructuring Principles* (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, 1994), p. 153.

**51** Reference *Re Canada Assistance Plan (B.C.)*, [1991] 2 S.C.R. 525.

**52** See the Budget Implementation Act, 1995, S.C. 1994-95, c. 17, Parts IV and V, ss. 31, 48.

**53** Hylton, "The Case for Aboriginal Self-Government" (cited in note 45), p. 39. See RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25), pp. 7-8.

**54** Ontario Fair Tax Commission, *Fair Taxation in a Changing World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 66.

**55** Brian Slattery, "Understanding Aboriginal Rights" (1987) 66 *Can. Bar Rev.* 727 at 776 [notes omitted].

**56** Hawkes and Maslove, "Fiscal Arrangements" (cited in note 47), p. 101.

**57** Aboriginal groups argued unsuccessfully before the English courts that the obligations imposed by pre- and post-Confederation treaties remained with the Imperial Crown. See *R. v. Secretary of State (Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)*, [1982] 2 All E.R. 118 (C.A.).

**58** See *R. v. Secretary of State*, at 135, Kerr L.J.; and at 142, May L.J.; and, generally, Alan Pratt, “The Fiduciary Relationship and Aboriginal Governance: Protection and Non-Interference”, discussion paper prepared for RCAP (1995).

**59** See *Liquidators of the Maritime Bank of Canada v. New Brunswick (Receiver-General)*, [1892] A.C. and Privy Council 437 at 441-42; and *Hodge v. R.*, [1883] 9 A.C. and Privy Council 117 at 132.

**60** See Morse, “Government Obligations” (cited in note 29), p. 83; and Pratt, “The Fiduciary Relationship” (cited in note 58).

**61** Affirmative action programs provide differential treatment in order to promote the idea of equality. See *Report of the Commission on Equality in Employment (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1984)*, pp. 2-3.

**62** See Dick at 326; and Kruger at 110 (both cited in note 31).

**63** See Morse, “Government Obligations” (cited in note 29), p. 88; and Bryan Schwartz, *First Principles, Second Thoughts: Aboriginal Peoples, Constitutional Reform and Canadian Statecraft* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1986).

**64** This was the situation in three of the four case studies of urban Aboriginal housing corporations undertaken by the Commission. The four case studies are MEWS Corporation (Stan Wilcox), “Urban Aboriginal Housing Project, Case Study: Gabriel Housing Corporation” (1993); H.P. Consultants, “Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation: Case Study” (1993); George W. Miller, “Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation of Ottawa: A Case Study” (1993); and Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting, “A Case Study of Urban Native Homes Inc. of Hamilton” (1993).

**65** See RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25), p. 85.

**66** RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres*.

**67** See also our special report, RCAP, *Bridging the Cultural Divide: A Report on Aboriginal People and Criminal Justice in Canada* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1996).

**68** Louis Bordeleau, Vice-President, Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec, transcripts of the hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [hereafter RCAP transcripts], Montreal, Quebec, 27 May 1993.

**69** RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25), p. 17.

**70** Gilchrist and Winchester, “Urban Perspectives”, (cited in note 8).

**71** Jason Thomas, All Nations Youth Council, RCAP transcripts, Prince George, British Columbia, 1 June 1993.

**72** Linda Clarkson, “A Case Study of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg as an Inclusive Status-Blind Urban Political Representative Organization”, research study prepared for RCAP (1994).

**73** Statistics Canada, “1 - Disability, 2 - Housing”, 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Catalogue No. 89-535 (Ottawa: 1994), and custom tabulations. ‘Disability’ is defined as any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. See also Volume 3, Chapter 5.

**74** Ted Harvey and Don McCaskill, Evaluation of the Native Friendship Centre Program: Final Report (Ottawa: Secretary of State, 1988).

**75** Native Council of Canada, “The Urban Circle: Needs and Attitudes of Natives”, brief submitted to RCAP (1993).

**76** National Association of Friendship Centres, “Final Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples”, Intervener Participation Program [IPP] report submitted to RCAP (1993).

**77** National Association of Friendship Centres, “Final Report”.

**78** 1995-96 Estimates, Part III, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Polar Commission (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1995), p. 2-57. See also SPR Associates, An Evaluation of the Cultural/Education Centres Program (Ottawa: DIAND, 1988).

**79** Absolon and Winchester, “Cultural Identity” (cited in note 7) (Halifax).

**80** RCAP, “Urban Workshop, Health and Wellness III”, National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, Edmonton, June 21-23, 1992, unedited transcript.

**81** Aboriginal Women’s Council (B.C.), “Traditional Self-Government, Economic Development and Aboriginal Women”, brief submitted to RCAP (1992), p. 43.

**82** See Darlene Hall, Ikwe Widdjiitiwin, RCAP transcripts, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992.

**83** See Jackie Adam, RCAP transcripts, Port Alberni, British Columbia, 20 May 1992.

**84** See Vicki English-Currie, RCAP transcripts, Calgary, Alberta, 26 May, 1993; Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Metis Nation, RCAP transcripts, Edmonton, Alberta, 15 June 1993; and Indian Homemakers’ Association of B.C. (IHABC), “A Quest for Self-Determination by First Nations Women”, brief submitted to RCAP (1993).

**85** IHABC, “Quest for Self-Determination”, pp. 38-39.

**86** See, for example, Jeanne Guillemin, *Urban Renegades: The Cultural Strategy of American Indians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Evelyn J. Peters, *Native Households in Winnipeg: Strategies of Co-Residence and Financial Support*, Research and Working Paper No. 5 (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 1984).

**87** Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting, “Aboriginal Self-Determination: The Role of Aboriginal Housing Initiatives”, research study prepared for RCAP (1994).

**88** See Carol Croxon, Director, Ojibway Family Resource Centre, RCAP transcripts, North Bay, Ontario, 10 May 1993; Ronnie Leah, Sociology Professor, University of Lethbridge, RCAP transcripts, Lethbridge, Alberta, 24 May 1993; Luanna Dawn Harper, Youth Commissioner for the Day, RCAP transcripts, Toronto, Ontario, 3 November 1992; Doris Young, Founding President, Indigenous Women’s Collective, RCAP transcripts, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 22 April 1992. See also RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25).

**89** Margaret King, Saskatoon Urban Treaty Indians, RCAP transcripts, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992.

**90** Vicki English-Currie, “Native Women’s Issues”, brief submitted to RCAP (1993), p. 4.

**91** Louis Bordeleau, Centre d’entraide autochtone de Senneterre, RCAP transcripts, Val d’Or, Quebec, 1 December 1992 [translation].

**92** Federation of Canadian Municipalities, “Municipalities and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada”, IPP report to RCAP (1993), presented to the Commission in Montreal, 1 December 1993.

**93** Federation of Canadian Municipalities, “Municipalities and Aboriginal Peoples”, p. 43.

**94** In its presentation to the Commission on 3 November 1993, the Native Council of Canada (since renamed the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples) put forward four suggestions for urban governance: (1) the creation of new bands in urban areas under the Indian Act; (2) Aboriginal neighbourhood communities; (3) pan-Aboriginal governments; and (4) autonomous Aboriginal agencies. The Commission suggests that developing an urban Aboriginal community of interest government would meet the needs these models were intended to address. See Native Council of Canada, “The First Peoples Urban Circle: Choices for Self-Determination”, Book I: The National Perspective, brief submitted to RCAP (1993), p. 43.

**95** Status-based urban organizations such as the Winnipeg First Nations Council and the Winnipeg Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation have so far chosen to associate themselves with provincial First Nation or Métis Nation organizations.



**96** Some organizations have argued that this form of urban self-government is a logical development for the existing base of non-profit Aboriginal service agencies in urban areas. See, for example, Clarkson, "A Case Study" (cited in note 72) and Native Council of Canada, "The First Peoples Urban Circle" (cited in note 94), p. 26. At the same time, some urban Aboriginal organizations do not see themselves in such a role. See, for example, Larry Soldier, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre, RCAP transcripts, Thompson, Manitoba, 1 June 1993; and Thomas K. Dockstader, N' Amerind Friendship Centre, RCAP transcripts, London, Ontario, 11 May 1993.

**97** Clarkson, "A Case Study".

**98** Native Council of Canada, "The First Peoples Urban Circle" (cited in note 94).

**99** Quoted in Native Council of Canada, "The First Peoples Urban Circle: Choices for Self-Determination", Book II, Legal and Jurisdictional Solutions, brief submitted to RCAP (1993), p. 46. See also National Association of Friendship Centres, "Final Report" (cited in note 76); and RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25).

**100** This point was made in presentations by Sylvia Maracle and Wayne Helgason to a workshop on urban self-government. See Evelyn J. Peters, ed., *Aboriginal Self-Government in Urban Areas, Proceedings of a Workshop*, 25 and 26 May 1994 (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, 1994).

**101** Terry Mountjoy, "Regina Perspectives on Aboriginal Government", in Peters, ed., *Aboriginal Self-Government in Urban Areas*, p. 150.

**102** New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, "Aboriginal Self-Governance Within the Province of New Brunswick", research study prepared for RCAP (1994).

**103** RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25), pp. 18-19. See also Margaret King, Saskatoon Urban Treaty Indians, RCAP transcripts, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992.

**104** Andrew Bear Robe, "The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance, Including Its Future Possibilities Within Canada", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

**105** See, for example, Council for Yukon Indians, *Umbrella Final Agreement* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1993); Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, "Planning Change, A Report to the Fifth Annual Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" (1993); and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, "First Nations Self-Government, A Special Research Report", research study prepared for RCAP (1993).

**106** Marc LeClair, "Métis Self-Government Origins and Urban Institutions", research study prepared for RCAP (1993). See also Ernie Blais, President, Manitoba Metis

Federation, RCAP transcripts, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2 June 1993; Metis National Council, "The State of Research and Opinion of the Metis Nation of Canada", brief submitted to RCAP; Metis Family and Community Justice Services, "Metis Self-Government in Saskatchewan", research study prepared for RCAP (1995); and Manitoba Metis Federation (The Pas Region), "Metis Self-Governance in Urban Manitoba", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

**107** RCAP, *Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres* (cited in note 25), p. 57.

**108** Instructions concerning definition of origin and particular directives for Aboriginal respondents have varied considerably over the years. See Gustave Goldmann, "The Aboriginal Population and the Census: 120 Years of Information — 1871 to 1991", paper presented at the 22nd General Population Conference of the International Union for Scientific Study of Population, Montreal, Quebec, 24 August 1993.

**109** In contrast to the general census, the focus of the APS was on how individuals identified themselves. It sampled 135,000 individuals who had indicated on their general census forms either that they had Aboriginal origins or that they were a registered Indian under the Indian Act. The individuals selected for the APS were then asked whether they identified with an Aboriginal group or were a registered Indian. Those who answered in the affirmative were asked to respond to the rest of the questionnaire.

**110** Patrick Falconer, "Urban Indian Needs: Federal Policy Responsibility and Options in the Context of the Talks on Aboriginal Self-Government", discussion paper (Winnipeg: 1985); and Peters, ed., *Aboriginal Self-Government in Urban Areas* (cited in note 100).

**111** The data on and analysis of migrations patterns are drawn from a research study prepared for RCAP and CMHC by Stewart Clatworthy, "The Migration and Mobility Patterns of Canada's Aboriginal Population". Reserves located in urban areas were included with reserve areas. Urban non-CMAs are urban areas with a population of less than 100,000 that correspond to the definition of urban used for the census (population of 1,000 or more and a density of 400 persons per square kilometre).

**112** Don Kerr, Andy Siggner, and Jean-Pierre Bourdeau, "Canada's Aboriginal Population, 1981-1991: A Summary Report", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

**113** Clatworthy, "Migration and Mobility Patterns" (cited in note 111).

**114** Yngve Georg Lithman, *The Community Apart: A Case Study of a Canadian Reserve Community* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1984); Kathleen A. Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Coast Salish Employment: A Test of Two Approaches to the Indian's Niche in North America", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 32/4 (Winter 1976), pp. 390-410; and Stewart Clatworthy, "Patterns of Native Employment in the Winnipeg Labour Market", research study prepared for the Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg (Winnipeg: 1981).

**115** Clatworthy, “Migration and Mobility Patterns” (cited in note 111), Table 35.

**116** Ark Research Associates, “The Housing Conditions of Aboriginal People in Canada, 1991: Summary Report”, prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Ottawa: 1995).

**117** Data on family status from Clatworthy, “Migration and Mobility Patterns” (cited in note 111).

**118** Data on socio-economic characteristics from Clatworthy, “Migration and Mobility Patterns”.