



Literature Review on Issues and Needs of Aboriginal People

to support work on

**“Scoping” Research On Issues For Municipal Governments
And Aboriginal People
Living Within Their Boundaries**

**Tom Carter,
Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation
Chesya Polevychok, Research Associate**

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1.0 Introduction

This literature review identifies the needs, issues and service gaps facing Aboriginal people¹ living in, or moving to, urban municipalities, and helps municipal governments develop strategies to address these needs, forge the proper partnerships, and identify resource requirements. The discussion also identifies the complexity and magnitude of the problems, suggesting the resources that are required are well beyond the current capacity of municipal governments. The complex and varied nature of programs and services for Aboriginal people dictate the need for a strong partnership consisting of all orders of government and the Aboriginal community. The same complexity will also require a good definition of roles and responsibilities but with sufficient program flexibility to adapt to unique needs in particular municipalities.

The report will begin with an overview of the current demographic context of urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada. A brief review of literature and relevant government documents and reports is provided to help highlight the issues and their implications. This includes a review of data from Statistics Canada to provide population numbers, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and migration trends. Following this contextual discussion the paper will turn its attention to the issues and needs faced by Aboriginals in urban municipalities. This section provides contextual material to help frame and explain many of the issues and understand the implications and challenges that confront municipal governments serving Aboriginal people living off reserve within their boundaries.

2.0 Urban Aboriginal People in Canada: Current Context

2.1 Aboriginal Population Growth

According to the 2001 Census over 1.3 million people, or 4.4 percent of Canada's total population, reported having Aboriginal ancestry. This represents a 22 percent increase compared to the 1996 Census figures, while the non-Aboriginal population grew by only 3.4 percent. About 62 percent of Canada's Aboriginal people are North American Indian, 30 percent Métis, 5 percent Inuit, the remaining 3 percent identifying with more than one group or as band members not identifying as Aboriginal.

2.2 Urbanization of the Aboriginal Population

Aboriginal people are attracted to the opportunities offered by urban centres and the urbanization of the Aboriginal population continues to increase. The 2001 Census shows that nearly half of the Aboriginal population (49 percent) lives in cities, up from 47 percent in 1996. At the same time, the proportion of Aboriginal people who lived on reserves and settlements declined from 33 percent to 31 percent. The overall proportion

¹ Aboriginal People: used to refer in a general sense all the First Nations, Inuits, Metis and Non-Status Indians in Canada.

of the population who lived in rural non-reserve areas declined slightly from 20.4 percent to 19.5 percent (Statistics Canada 2003). One-quarter of Aboriginal people live in just ten Canadian cities (in order): Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Saskatoon, Regina, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal, and Victoria.

Statistics Canada's demographic profile of Aboriginal people indicates that the highest concentrations of Aboriginal population in 2001 were in the North and on the Prairies (ibid.). The 56,000 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg represent eight percent of the city's total population. The highest concentration of Aboriginal people in a metropolitan centre was in Saskatoon, where 20,275 Aboriginals comprised nine percent of its population. Aboriginal people accounted for less than one percent of the population in Canada's two largest census metropolitan areas: Toronto (0.4 percent) and Montréal (0.3 percent).

The 22,720 Aboriginal people in Nunavut represent 85 percent of the territory's total population, the highest concentration in the country. Aboriginal people represented more than one-half (51 percent) of the population of the Northwest Territories, and almost one-quarter (23 percent) of the population of the Yukon. The top five communities with the largest proportion of the population reporting an Inuit identity in 2001 were Iqaluit, Baker Lake, Kuujuaq, Arviat and Rankin Inlet. The proportion of Inuit population in these centres ranges from 58 to 94 percent.

Among small urban municipalities, the concentration of Aboriginal people was the greatest in the Saskatchewan city of Prince Albert, where 11,640 Aboriginal people accounted for 29 percent of Prince Albert's total population. Prince George, B.C., was second, with nine percent of its population identifying itself as Aboriginal (ibid.).

2.3 High Mobility Levels

A high mobility level is one of the most important characteristics of Aboriginal people. This high mobility increases the already significant barriers to program and service delivery, posing challenges in reaching, maintaining contact and delivering housing and health care, social services, training, and education.

Statistics Canada reports that one in five Aboriginal people moved in the 12 months before the 2001 Census was taken, compared to one in seven for the general Canadian population (ibid.). There was a net gain of about 1,145 Aboriginal people to census metropolitan areas: 14,375 Aboriginal people moved into one of the 27 census metropolitan areas, while 13,230 moved out. This net gain represented only 0.4 percent of the 274,235 Aboriginal people who lived in these large urban areas. Conversely, more Aboriginal people moved out of the smaller, non-metropolitan urban areas than moved in. A total of 15,475 Aboriginal people moved into these areas in the year prior to the 2001 census, while 16,270 moved out. This net loss of 795 also represented 0.4 percent of the total Aboriginal population of 209,770 who lived in these mid-sized municipalities. The

pattern in 2001 of small net increases in the movement to reserves and larger urban centres is a continuation of a trend that has been observed since 1981.

According to the Caledon Institute of Social Policy 30 percent (or 12,630 people) of the Aboriginal identity population in Winnipeg changed its address at least once in the year previous to the 2001 Census; of this 30 percent about 7 percent (or 3,645 people) came from a different Census subdivision (Mendelson 2004). Of this latter group, probably a substantial number came from a reserve either directly, or indirectly through an intermediary smaller city or town. An Institute's of Urban Studies report (2004) focusing on recent arrivals to Winnipeg noted that mobility remained high, even after households arrived in the City. Approximately 400 recently arrived households were surveyed three times with the surveys four months apart. Between the first and second surveys 31 percent of the households moved once, 58 percent twice and 11 percent three times. Between the second and third surveys 77 percent moved once, 20 percent twice and 3 percent three times. Mobility remains high even after arriving in major urban centres but it does decline with the length of time in the centre.

The fact that Aboriginal Canadians relocate more frequently than other Canadians is indicative that their needs are not addressed and that vital programs and services are not in place or are not being effectively delivered. Aboriginal Canadians move and migrate for family motives, in the search for better jobs, housing, health care, training and education, creating numerous difficulties in the provision of vital programs and services.

2.4 Age Composition of the Aboriginal Population

The Aboriginal population of Canada is not only growing faster, but it is much younger than the general Canadian population. As a result of the higher birth rate among Aboriginal people (about 1.5 times that of the non-Aboriginal birth rate), the median age of Canada's Aboriginal population in 2001 was 13 years younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population (24.7 and 37.7 years old respectively) (Statistics Canada 2003). For example, in Saskatchewan the median age of the non-Aboriginal population is over 20 years older than the median age of Saskatchewan Aboriginal people (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003).

Aboriginal children represented 5.6 percent of all children in Canada although Aboriginal people only represent 4.4 percent of the total population. One-third of the Aboriginal population in 2001 were children aged 14 and under, far higher than the corresponding share of 19 percent in the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada 2003). In contrast, the share of seniors only accounted for about four percent of the Aboriginal population. Seniors represented 13 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. Although Aboriginal people have shorter life expectancies, experience more violent and accidental deaths, and have higher infant mortality rates, Aboriginal people are living longer and there is a growing number of seniors in the Aboriginal population.

2.5 Summary of Demographic Trends

The Aboriginal population is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of society and an increasing proportion of Aboriginal people live in urban centres. They are a young population with a high but declining birth rate. With one-third of the population under the age of 14 years, Aboriginal people represent a large proportion of the labour force of the future in many municipalities. Their general socio-economic characteristics highlight a high level of marginalization and poverty, dictating a need for a wide range of services. 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. High mobility rates of Aboriginal people makes service and program delivery difficult.

3.0 Issues and Needs of Aboriginal People in Urban Municipalities

Several studies emphasize the social and economic marginalization of urban Aboriginal populations (Beavis et al. 1997, Hanselmann 2001, Lee 2000, Richards 2001, Graham and Peters 2002, LaPrairie 1994). The situation of Aboriginal people is considerably worse on nearly every social and economic indicator compared to non-Aboriginal. These include high rates of homelessness, unemployment, poverty, crime, lower levels of education and a higher number of health related problems. A number of case studies in prairie cities illustrate a high degree of dependence on transfer payments of the urban Aboriginal population; a large proportion of families, which are mother-led, and very few non-family households (Peters 1992). With the increasing urbanization of Aboriginals, the well being of Aboriginal people in cities has a direct impact on the well being of the cities themselves, especially in Western Canada and the North.

Jurisdictional issues have made urban Aboriginal people's access to services even more problematic. Intergovernmental disputes, federal and provincial offloading, lack of program co-ordination, exclusion of municipal governments and urban Aboriginal groups from discussions on policy and jurisdictional matters, and confusion regarding the political representation of Aboriginal people in cities have all contributed to a situation that has had negative impact on the ability of Aboriginal people to gain access to appropriate services in urban centres (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

3.1 Education

Extensive research is available on educational outcomes for Aboriginal youth (Silver and Mallett 2002, Wotherspoon and Schissel 1998, Cowley and Easton 2004, Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education 2000). For Aboriginal people, rates of high school graduation and attendance at post-secondary schools are well below the rest of Canada. In 2001, among non-Aboriginal Canadians 15 years of age and older, 69 percent have graduated from high school (Statistics Canada 2001). Among the analogous Aboriginal-identity population (both on- and off-reserve), 52 percent graduated from high school, representing a gap of 17 percentage points. Only 8 percent of the 25-34 age group

of Aboriginal people had completed a university degree compared to 28 percent of all Canadians.

Poor school attendance is also a serious problem among Aboriginal youth. Some urban centres – Thunder Bay, Montreal, Victoria, Toronto and Regina – manage to retain Aboriginal youth in school at rates nearing 80 percent, which is close to the 83 percent average attained by non-Aboriginal youth (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003). However, nationally, eight out ten Aboriginal youth drop out of high school (Statistics Canada 2001).

If youth are not in school, they often get involved in crime, prostitution, and early pregnancy. There are many complex reasons why youth stop attending school: poverty; racism; lack of parental involvement; resentment caused by feeling less successful scholastically than other students; high rates of residential mobility; inability to afford text books, sporting equipment, and excursion fees; unstable home life; and the damaging effects of residential schools on Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and languages.

Several studies have examined the issue of improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal youth. The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples presents the key needs (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003):

- The need to recruit and train more Aboriginal teachers and staff;
- The need for cross cultural sensitivity training for non-Aboriginal teachers and staff;
- The need for culturally-sensitive learning environments, culturally-appropriate curriculum development with the knowledge of Aboriginal languages and traditions necessary for cultural continuity;
- The need for increased parental involvement;
- The development of urban Aboriginal schools; and
- Secondary school supports and guidance for Aboriginal youth.

Where Aboriginal education programs exist, their quality tends to vary from one community to another. In Edmonton, for instance, a community-based program serves Aboriginal students in a number of different schools. In Manitoba, by contrast, students' learning is very fragmented as there is no comprehensive curriculum, and Aboriginal history is not compulsory (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993). A solution to this problem could be alternative Aboriginal education within the regular school system. The courses developed through programs such as these would be included in the general curriculum and not be confined only to Aboriginal students.

Many Aboriginal people reach adulthood without the skills, ranging from basic literacy and numeracy to advanced professional training, or credentials they need to find jobs. Existing adult training programs offer few of the personal supports they need, especially child care for adult women students.

3.2 Unemployment

Aboriginal people living in urban areas are participating in the labour force in rates about equal to other Canadians. According to The Caledon Institute of Social Policy in 14 major cities (those with Aboriginal identity populations of more than 5,000) Montreal, Ottawa-Hull, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Sudbury, Calgary and Victoria Aboriginal participation rates in 2001 were almost the same as participation rates among the total population (Mendelson 2004).

The 2001 unemployment rates among the Aboriginal identity population in the 14 cities range from a low of 7.3 percent in Ottawa-Hull to a high of 22.7 percent in Thunder Bay. Regina and Saskatoon are among the worst of the cities in respect of Aboriginal unemployment: unemployment rates of Aboriginal people versus the total population for each city ranged from 1.3 times higher in Ottawa to 3.3 and 3.5 times greater in Saskatoon and Regina. The Caledon Institute's report indicates that geographically there is a pattern of rising unemployment rates from the east to the west that reach their highest levels in Saskatchewan's cities and then diminish further to the west.

According to the Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) project The average unemployment rate among the Aboriginal identity population living in the municipalities was more than twice the rate of the QOLRS average for the non-Aboriginal identity population in 2001 (13.3 and 6.2 percent respectively) (Federation of Canadian Municipalities). The average rates for the 20 QOLRS centres, although high, is still some six percent below the national average for Aboriginal people, suggesting that moving to urban centres may improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal unemployment rates have dropped in the 20 urban centres since 1991 when the average was 15 percent.

Aboriginal people face discrimination in hiring and employment. They earn about one-third less in wages. Aboriginals are less likely to have full-time, year-round jobs and are much more likely to be employed in manual trades such as construction than in white collar jobs as professionals, administrators, managers or clerks. The major barrier to increased Aboriginal participation in the labour force continues to be lower education levels and a lack of marketable skills. Literacy, combined with life skills programs is a way to encourage Aboriginal people to upgrade their skills, seek higher education and find employment.

Many urban areas simply do not have enough jobs for the Aboriginal people entering the work force. Even the improvements in educational achievements can be undermined if a young and more educated workforce cannot find rewarding work. As Aboriginal children and youth move through the education system and into the labour market in coming years, they will account for an increasing part of the growth of the working-age population, particularly in the provinces where concentrations of Aboriginal people are

the highest. Ensuring that education, housing and employment are available for this group will be a major requirement over the coming decades.

3.3 Poverty

Aboriginal people living in cities were more than twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Aboriginal people. A study conducted by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) on urban poverty in Canada reported that in 1996 55.6 percent of Aboriginal people in cities were living in poverty, compared to 24 percent of non-Aboriginal people (Lee 2000). In 2001 55 percent of urban Aboriginal youth in Canada's largest cities, and 42 percent of Aboriginal youth in Canada's other towns and cities, live below the low-income cut-off (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003).

According to the 2001 Census, Aboriginal households reported an average of \$49,123 in before-tax income, 19.9 percent less than non-Aboriginal households (\$61,311). The First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study conducted in Winnipeg indicates that 75 percent of the single parent families in the study group had an annual family income under \$15,000 (Institute of Urban Studies 2004).

There are distinct regional disparities in the poverty rate among the urban Aboriginal population, with the incidence of poverty being greatest in western urban centres (Lee 2000). Based on the 1996 census Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina demonstrated significantly high rates of Aboriginal poverty. In Regina, Aboriginal people accounted for 24.3 percent of the poor population, more than three times their proportion of the total population. In Winnipeg and Saskatoon, Aboriginal people represented 17.6 and 22.5 percent of the poor in those cities, respectively (ibid.).

The Aboriginal poor tend to be spatially concentrated within the poorest areas, predominantly inner city neighbourhoods. The residential clustering of Aboriginal people in core areas of the cities can result in neighbourhoods characterized by the negative concentration effects of poverty (Hatfield 1997, Lee 2000, Richards 2001).

3.4 Housing

Housing remains a major problem. The difficulties associated with obtaining and remaining satisfied with housing are related to housing affordability, adequacy, and quality (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993, Norris and Clatworthy 2003, Norris and Siggner 2003, Institute of Urban Studies 2004). Aboriginal people migrate to urban areas in search of jobs and better housing, but they often end up living in poor quality, unaffordable housing in declining inner city neighbourhoods. Aboriginal people's access to housing is also limited by the shortage of housing, discrimination by landlords, and lack of information on housing availability. According to the Institute of Urban Studies (2004), 70 percent of Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg identified

housing (both rent subsidized and market) as the most important service they needed. The study reports:

- 85 percent of renters earned \$15,000 or less, with most spending in excess of 30 percent on shelter, causing an affordability crisis.
- 35 percent of households had additional tenants that helped with affordability issues but contributed to overcrowding. Households had in excess of two persons per bedroom in each survey.
- The unavailability of housing at rents Aboriginal people could afford given their low average incomes contributed to the spatial concentration of 85 percent of the respondents within the inner city boundaries where the older, poor quality and lower priced rental stock is concentrated.

Aboriginal households are three times more likely to rent than to own their homes: half of Aboriginal households own their home, compared to over two-thirds of non-Aboriginal households. Housing shortages or poor quality housing are particular problems for Aboriginal elders, lone-parent families, transients, people in crisis, and students. Their low income, lack of savings and lack of financial support, as well as the general lack of home-buying initiatives and low-income rental housing, contribute to their housing problem.

In 2001, off-reserve Aboriginal households accounted for 2.8 percent of all Canadian off-reserve households, but for 4.3 percent of all households in core housing need. Almost one in four off-reserve Aboriginal households were in core housing need, compared to 15.6 percent of non-Aboriginal households, and the proportion for CMAs and CAs exceeds the ratio for small urban centres in rural and remote areas (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples 2004). Extremely high proportions of Aboriginal one-parent households are in core housing need. In urban Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, where most Aboriginal lone-parent households are located, core housing need affects more than seven of ten households overall, and eight in ten of those renting (Ark Research Associates 1997).

In 2001, 7 percent of Aboriginal households lived in inadequate homes (homes that required major repairs) compared to close to 3 percent of non-Aboriginal households (CMHC 2004). Aboriginal households are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to live in crowded apartments and to face eviction. Close to 5 percent of Aboriginal households lived in crowded conditions compared to a little over 1 percent of non-Aboriginal households in 2001 (*ibid.*). The overcrowding situation is the worst in the Inuit regions. As stated by Backgrounder on Inuit and Housing (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2004) overcrowding in Canada generally is 7 percent. For Inuit the average number of households that are overcrowded is 53 percent, which is much higher than the rate for other Aboriginal peoples (13 percent for urban Aboriginals, and 19 percent for rural Aboriginals).

An important concern is that housing is not culturally appropriate. As defined by the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues (1993, p.17):

Culturally appropriate housing for Aboriginal urban people is... housing that is low-rent and may be Aboriginal-owned and -operated. It may include visits from elders or counselling programs for behavioural problems or substance abuse. The leases might have restrictions banning people who drink alcohol or take chemical substances. In short, such housing would form a mini-community for Aboriginal urban people seeking a safe, culturally appropriate environment in which to raise their children... This kind of housing is becoming more sought after, although there are too few units by far to fill the need.

There is a significant demand for rent geared to income housing for urban Aboriginal families. The urban Aboriginal housing groups in Winnipeg have over 2,400 people on waiting lists for the 800 units of housing they manage. The Manitoba Housing Authority has over 3,000 people on a waiting list for the housing authority's 8,000 rent subsidized housing units in Winnipeg (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2004). The wait time for a unit in Winnipeg may be two to three years but even longer in larger urban centres like Toronto.

The Institute of Urban Studies (2004) recommends:

- Aboriginal persons should have access to a range of housing choices that are suitable and located in a variety of neighbourhoods - public housing, non-profit and rent subsidized units as well as increased access to market rental options.
- To alleviate the housing crisis, it was determined that two changes must take place, building more housing (rent subsidized and market) and increasing incomes so as to better afford shelter costs.
- Any expansion of housing must ensure good proximity to the services Aboriginal people require.

3.5 Homelessness

It is difficult to accurately assess the numbers of homeless individuals in urban municipalities. However, all urban centres have problems of affordable housing and homelessness. According to CMHC (2004) Aboriginal people are over-represented in the homeless population in every major city where statistics are available. For example, in Hamilton, Aboriginal people represent 2 percent of the city's population, but make up 20 percent of the homeless population. In Edmonton, Aboriginal people made up 43 percent of the homeless while comprising only about 6 percent of the overall population.

The study on homelessness in Saskatchewan emphasises the diversity of Aboriginal homeless population (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies 2000, p.82):

... there are single men and women, single young men and women, mothers with children, and two-parent families. Some of these people have been homeless for many years and others are newly homeless. Some have alcohol or drug problems. Some choose to be homeless; others just need money. Some have money but not enough to pay rent in cities that has a shortage of affordable housing. People who are homeless, transient, staying in emergency shelters, or living in substandard housing or in overcrowded and unsafe housing characterize urban homelessness.

Homelessness to a significant extent is generated by lack of appropriate policies, uncoordinated services, the absence of affordable housing, insufficient supportive housing, high unemployment, and cuts to welfare rates. Contributing social factors include poor health, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty. Access to services is often limited due to lack of transportation, childcare needs, lack of resources, and lack of knowledge and information.

The Saskatchewan study listed general barriers experienced by individuals in their attempts to seek housing, shelter, and accommodation in Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon (ibid.):

- Long waitlist for social housing
- No emergency shelters for families, women and children
- Lack of transitional housing
- There are limited organizations that provide housing – most organizations can only refer their clients to social housing
- There is no housing for males, subsidized housing for disabled and elderly, or crisis housing for families in need
- Lack of information on available low-income housing, hotels and hostels, co-op housing, rentals, low income for singles, finance options
- No emergency help/hot line. Protection for abuse discrimination, advocacy
- Need for more low-income housing groups, co-op housing, First Nations co-ops, and tenant associations

Though Aboriginal homelessness has many features in common with homelessness in the general population and many of the same strategies are recommended to deal with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness, the literature indicates that the Aboriginal homeless have special needs that should be addressed (e.g., cultural appropriateness, traditional healing techniques, etc.) (Beavis et. al. 1997).

3.6 Health

Urban Aboriginal people face serious challenges in health. Often the reasons for a specific illness include factors outside the realm of medicine - social, emotional and economic conditions. The fundamental inequality that puts Aboriginal people at risk for poor health is income. Statistic's Canada study on the health status of the Aboriginal population living off reserve across the country found that Aboriginals living in cities and

towns were more likely to have chronic health conditions, long-term activity restrictions and depression than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Tjepkema 2002). Some key findings include:

- In 2000/01 20 percent of off reserve Aboriginal people reported an unmet health care need, significantly higher than 13 percent for the non-Aboriginal population.
- The off reserve Aboriginal population was 1.5 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to report fair or poor health.
- The off-reserve Aboriginals were 1.5 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to experience a major depressive episode and to report at least one chronic condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure or arthritis; and;
- The off reserve Aboriginal population was 1.4 times more likely to report a long-term activity restriction than the non-Aboriginal population.

The survey also looked at health determinants and found that more of off reserve Aboriginals were smokers (51.4 percent compared to 26.5 percent for the non-Aboriginal population), were obese (24.7 percent compared to 14.0 percent), and were heavy drinkers (22.6 and 16.1 percent respectively) (ibid.). The National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues (1993) reveal that 73 per cent of the people who use the needle exchange program in Winnipeg, and 63 per cent in Calgary, are of Aboriginal origin.

According to Health Canada, nationally, the proportion of Canada's total *AIDS* cases contracted by *Aboriginal people* climbed from 1.0 percent in 1990 to 7.2 percent in 2001. Over that same period, the tuberculosis rate among First Nations people remained 8 to 10 times that seen in the Canadian population as a whole.

The study *Sharing Our Stories on Promoting Health and Community Healing* indicates that the top three concerns from an Aboriginal women's perspective are family violence, diabetes, and mental health issues followed closely by cancer and hypertension (Deiter and Otway 2001). Other concerns included depression, substance abuse, environmental issues, liver disease, obesity, sexual transmitted diseases, HIV and HEP C. The health needs identified by women included increased funding for non-insured benefits: many of the women live under the poverty line and do not have the financial resources for eyeglasses, dentures, dental care and prescription drugs. Mental health resources are practically non-existent in many communities. Other needs included lack of resources for proper nutritional diet, inadequate access to medical facilities, and long waiting lists to see doctors.

Aboriginal people with disabilities face special problems, which are further compounded by cultural differences and the other problems faced by urban Aboriginals (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993). The biggest problem disabled people face is government bureaucracy and jurisdictional problems. Other needs include accessible

housing, adequate home care, transportation, and opportunities for social interaction. Educational and training programs are not designed to accommodate people with disabilities or to meet their needs and employment opportunities are limited.

The institutions that deliver human services need to become more sensitive to the distinctive health and healing needs of Aboriginal people. Even when Aboriginal people are a major part of the client base, hospitals and other institutions are slow to adapt their practices to Aboriginal needs. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) reports that there are only 40 to 50 Aboriginal physicians in Canada. That amounts to 0.1 per cent of all physicians. There are about 300 Aboriginal registered nurses, or 0.1 per cent of the total. Cultural sensitivity and responsiveness should become a priority in health service programming and delivery.

3.3 Violence

Violence in many forms - family violence, sexual abuse, child abuse and wife battering - is prevalent throughout Aboriginal communities. The delegates of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues spoke about violence as a means of venting frustration and a signal of despair (*ibid.*). Child, sexual, and elder abuse is common, but often not talked about.

Among the reasons for violence are poverty, lack of work, alcohol abuse, hopelessness, and fear that prevents people from stopping the cycle of violence. Participants of the Round Table discussion said, for example, that women withdraw charges against their abusers at the last minute because they are afraid of not being believed or of the consequences.

There is the lack of facilities for abuse victims in urban Aboriginal communities. More shelters for battered women are needed, more counselling for children victimized by violence, and counselling for men as victimizers. The delegates also recommended the establishment of a 24-hour hot line in friendship centres with trained counsellors to work as crisis intervention workers and to help people recover from the trauma of violence. Aboriginal people need more information about how to get out of abusive situations through counselling, safe homes and legal sanctions. As well, there must be greater efforts to inform Aboriginal people about violence and its consequences.

3.4 Mobility

Mobility creates numerous difficulties in the provision of vital programs and services for urban Aboriginal people. Aboriginal Canadians move and migrate for the following reasons: family motives, the search for better jobs, housing, health care, training and education. (Norris and Clatworthy 2003, Institute of Urban Studies 2004). The fact that Aboriginals relocate more frequently than other Canadians is indicative that their needs are not addressed and that vital programs and services are not present or are not being

effectively delivered. The implication of frequent mobility in urban areas is high population turnover and changing composition with consequent disruptive effects on individuals, families, communities, and service providers.

There are significant demographic and socio-economic differences among residential movers and migrants, with consequent different needs and services for each of these groups. For example, Aboriginal migrants, who represent about 20 percent of the urban Aboriginal population of Canada's larger cities, tend to be younger, have younger often single parent families and fewer children (Norris and Clatworthy 2003).

Registered Indians who move from more remote reserves to the large urban areas may face the greater challenges as there may be a significant gap between their cultural and educational experience and urban realities (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003). In contrast, those moving from reserves closer to, or within, large urban areas may have less difficulty adapting to urban life.

As reported by the Institute of Urban Studies (2004), first time movers appeared to be most in need of temporary housing units and additional supports and services, especially education and training. It was suggested that the location and visibility of any service delivery agency is of critical importance to maximize the likelihood that as many persons as possible will be able to easily access available services. It was also established that those respondents with low residential satisfaction tended to move more frequently - both within the city and outside. Expending effort to improve housing quality and neighbourhood conditions as well as to increase community involvement are needed to lower mobility among Aboriginals.

3.5 Children

Aboriginal children face several issues. In large urban areas Aboriginal children are almost as likely to live with a single parent as they are with both parents. About 50 percent of Aboriginal children living in census metropolitan areas lived with two parents compared to almost 83 percent of non-Aboriginal children in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2003). Urban Aboriginal children are also approximately twice as likely as non-Aboriginal children to be poor and to have moved in the previous year (Longfield and Godfrey 2003). They are four times as likely to be born to adolescent parents and to have experienced hunger; 39 percent of Aboriginal single mothers earn less than \$12,000 per year (ibid.). For young Aboriginal parents isolation is a key issue, particularly when they are not accessing available community services.

Analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth² indicates that adolescent mothers are more likely to be depressed, have lower educational outcomes, be single mothers, and live in poverty. The children of adolescent mothers are

² The National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth (NLSCY) is a long-term study of Canadian children conducted by Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada.

more likely to demonstrate difficult temperament and have lower vocabulary scores than children of older groups of mothers.

While Aboriginal children represent the fastest growing segment of Canada's youth population, they continue to have higher rates of infant mortality and disability, and incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Children's over-representation in the child welfare system and disproportionate rates of school dropout are growing. Frequent moving of children and their families, the lack of a permanent address or phone number made it difficult to access services with waiting lists, such as subsidized daycare. Participation in ongoing services, such as Aboriginal Head Start programs, is jeopardized when children move to new neighbourhoods across the city and parents are unable to provide transportation (ibid.).

3.6 Youth

Due to the proportionately younger Aboriginal population, some of the most crucial needs relate to Aboriginal youth. Statistically the large prairie cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg seem to present the greatest challenges to young Aboriginal people as they face poverty, violence and racism, cultural and social alienation. Other common problems include (Chalifoux and Johnson 2003):

- Low levels of education, poor school attendance, high unemployment and poor job prospects;
- Lack of parental involvement and support;
- Being young single parents with poor parenting skills;
- Loss of identity, language and culture;
- Substance abuse;
- Difficulties obtaining accommodation; and
- Difficulties accessing services.

The Aboriginal youth suicide rate in Canada is five to six times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1995). Many young Aboriginal urban people are homeless, involved in prostitution, drugs and violence. The lack of recreational facilities and programs are often the primary reason for addictive and criminal activity. A high percentage of the people using needle exchange programs in cities like Edmonton and Vancouver are Aboriginal youth.

One of the biggest problems in Aboriginal homes and communities is the lack of proper sex education, which results in high rates of Aboriginal teen pregnancy, with many babies being born with health problems and taken into the foster care system. A special report on the sexual health of urban Aboriginal youth entitled *Tenuous Connections: Urban Aboriginal Youth Sexual Health and Pregnancy* indicates that teenage pregnancy among First Nations youth in British Columbia, Alberta, the Prairie and Atlantic provinces are up to four times higher than the national average (Anderson 2002). For

young women under 15 years of age, the rate is estimated to be as much as 18 times higher than that of the general teenage population.

The issues affecting youth require the provision of both long- and short-term assistance. Long-term solutions should be based on job skills development, education, recreation programs, sound parenting skills, as well as strong community, cultural and family supports. Short-term solutions include rehabilitation for addictions, prevention from disease through needle exchange, and safe places to meet the needs of young prostitutes. Aboriginal youth moving to urban centres are in need of transition services: housing supports and referrals; employment and training services; English literacy skills; counselling services; advocacy and liaison; education and career planning; and, information on programs and services available.

3.11 Crime and Incarceration

Although Aboriginal people accounted for only 2 percent of the total Canadian population 18 years and over, they accounted for 16 percent of the total provincial/territorial sentenced admissions in 1996/97 (Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit 1998). There are approximately 2,400 Aboriginal people in federal institutions and provincial institutions under the federal-provincial Exchange of Services Agreement, or on conditional release in the community. An estimated 70 percent of all Aboriginal people sentenced to penitentiaries are either residents of urban (non-reserve) communities, or committed their offences while off-reserve (ibid.). A recent study of a large sample of Aboriginal inmates incarcerated in Canadian federal penitentiaries (Johnston 1997) also found that only one-quarter of the group had originally come from reserve or remote areas; 44 percent originally came from rural areas, and 30 percent from urban areas.

The reasons for this over-representation are numerous and complex (LaPrairie 1992, Johnston 1997, Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit 1998). It is possible that Aboriginal people committing crimes in urban areas may be more likely to be reported, more likely to be detected because of greater police coverage in those areas, or because they commit crimes which are more likely to be reported or detected (e.g. public disturbances) than on reserves. It may also be that there are more opportunities for diversion from courts and from prisons in non-urban areas than in urban ones.

In her study *Seen But not Heard: Native People in the Inner City* Carol LaPrairie (1994) distinguishes three distinct sub-groups among the inner city people that differ from one another both in terms of their involvement in the justice system, socio-economic circumstances, and lifestyles. LaPrairie contends that the method of approach to these different inner city Aboriginal groups must be different if they are to be helped through services. People, most involved in the justice system, are major users of street-level services, but these services tend to be for very basic needs and have no fundamental impact on their lives. What they most need and can benefit from is safety, periodic

detoxification, and shelter. The next group, having somewhat better life circumstances than the first group, is more likely to benefit from education, vocational training, and job-entry opportunities for learning skills on the job. The group that has the least involvement in the justice system are the primary users of existing services and are more likely to seek out opportunities and services.

Services to eliminate crime and incarceration must address the root causes of crime and include recreational facilities; appropriate counselling programs; better delivery of services; housing/shelter; drop-in centres; community development and cultural opportunities; legal services; halfway houses and programs to help the Aboriginal offender re-enter the community (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993, LaPrairie 1994).

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

Urban Aboriginal people remain among the most disadvantaged groups in Canada. People experience poorer health, lower levels of education, lower average incomes, and higher rates of unemployment, compared with the non-Aboriginal population. High incarceration levels and increasing youth suicide rates indicate the presence of serious social difficulties as well. Intergovernmental collaboration is required to address these inequities and assist in the social and cultural healing processes are priority issues for governments. This marginalization, if left unaddressed, can result in emerging urban ghettos and risk undermining stability of communities.

In cities across Canada there are now housing projects, childcare agencies, education and training institutions, and other services available to Aboriginal people. Urban Aboriginal people receive services from all orders of government, from mainstream service organizations as well as from non-profit Aboriginal organizations. In many urban areas with large Aboriginal populations, such as Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Edmonton, Aboriginal service agencies and programs are instrumental in providing services in education, health, community development and training, child and family services, housing, social services, legal services, and arts and cultural development. In addition to providing greatly needed services, they are also important vehicles for supporting Aboriginal identity, and since they are directed and administered by Aboriginal people, service institutions are also working examples of Aboriginal self-government in urban centres.

However, despite all the successful efforts in urban Aboriginal services and programming, existing resources are unable to satisfy the depth of need. This literature review identified several key service delivery areas that have to be addressed:

- Education and training;
- Poverty reduction;
- Lack of family services and childcare;

- Health;
- Addictions, abuse-rehabilitation programs, mental health disabilities;
- Housing that is available, adequate, and affordable;
- Services for youth and children;
- Services to reduce crime and incarceration;
- Programming that is culturally-relevant; and,
- Volunteers and skilled workers and sufficient funding to deliver program services.

The studies reviewed have shown that Aboriginal women, children and youth in cities face particular challenges and are among the most vulnerable. This suggests that special consideration should be placed on developing services and coordinating efforts that respond to the circumstances of Aboriginal women, youth and children in urban municipalities.

In accessing programs or services Aboriginal people meet several barriers. They have multiple needs and often they are high-risk clientele, facing discrimination, lacking support and resources. Public transportation systems must promote ease of access to essential community services and accommodate commuting outside of peak periods.

Many Aboriginal people do not use existing programs and services due to lack of knowledge of available programs and services, and their discomfort in unfamiliar surroundings. This discomfort means that some people turn away before entering the doors of a particular program or agency. There is an acute need for information on services available, housing supports, advocacy, financing, and other resources for low-income people.

The level and quality, as well as accessibility of services have always been inadequate to deal with the problems of the Aboriginal urban population. Cutbacks to some areas of social programming over the last fifteen years as well confusion over jurisdictional responsibility have not helped to improve the situation.

As a result of the confusion and disagreements over jurisdiction, the needs of urban Aboriginal people have sometimes been over-looked by public policies and programs. The federal government has historically claimed responsibility for First Nations on reserves and Inuit in Inuit communities, but their responsibility for off reserve Aboriginal people is far less clear. With the exception of some education and health benefits, federal services are not always available once Aboriginals leave a reserve or Inuit and Aboriginals leave their northern communities. Métis and all others who are not Aboriginals as defined by the Indian Act receive no services under federal legislation. Many provincial governments have maintained that the federal government is responsible for all Aboriginal people, and, until recently, have largely limited their responsibility for services and programs for off reserve Aboriginal population. Some municipal

governments attempt to fill policy and program vacuums but they do not have the resources to deal with the many demands for services.

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