

REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE
IN ATLANTIC CANADA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on Aboriginal Child Care in Atlantic Canada presents information on an issue that has generally received very little political attention. Yet, it is an issue that speaks to the heart of the future of the Aboriginal population. The misconception that the care of children is only a womens' issue has been absorbed into the Aboriginal population. This reality flies in the face of Aboriginal tradition and heritage where all people in the community held responsibility for the proper care, development and nurturing of its children.

This report presents information on Aboriginal child care according to the conditions and realities in each of the four provinces making up Atlantic Canada. Child care information from each province is presented under the same format, for the purpose of ensuring that the topic receive the respectful attention it deserves. Further, this division ensures that information presented on the coverage of each province is a stand alone section and independent of the other sections. This reflects the political reality of the independence of each province and the control of child care within the Aboriginal authorities of these areas.

The information was gathered through personal and telephone interviews with recognized specialists throughout the region, and augmented with a literature review (where such information was available). The researcher/writer ensured that all perspectives were respected, including: Aboriginal and non-aboriginal; community based and organization based; government and non-government; parent and care giver; advocate and politician; and traditional and contemporary. If gaps of information exist or a specific issue is not covered completely, this may be due to the limited amount of time and fiscal resources with which the researcher/writer undertook this project.

Appreciation is given to all individuals who willingly assisted with providing information and answering questions. Gratitude is also conveyed to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for the opportunity to undertake this research, especially on a critical issue that has not been documented previously. It is hoped that the information contained in this report proves to be useful to child care professionals, advocates and especially to children. We must never forget their, (our childrens'), needs because if we do, we are committing the greatest sin that people can commit.

A Historic Perspective on Child Care in Canada

The development of child care as an organized system has not yet occurred, although child care has been an issue in Canada for more than a century. The first child care centres were set up in the 1850's in the industrialized provinces of Ontario and Quebec, usually to provide care for children of working parents.¹

From that time onward the development of child care in Canada was very slow. At the turn of the century 15 centres existed in Canada with their operating costs covered from service fees and other donations. As the population increased and moved westward the demand increased, however government policy makers were reluctant to concede that increases in womens' participation in the workforce would remain over the long term.

In the 1920's, child development centres focussed on intellectual stimulation and were specially targeted at poor families. Eventually private nurseries were set up to meet the needs of economically independent families in response to the perceived advantages of this early childhood education. During the Second World War the Federal and the provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec cost-shared child care costs to meet the new demands placed on child care by the war effort, and womens' involvement in the laborforce. The federal government withdrew its participation at the end of the conflict. However,

In 1966, the federal government reactivated federal funding for day care through the Canada Assistance Plan, cost-sharing with the provinces child care services for those "in need" or "likely to become in need."^{1,2}

The impact of this cost sharing arrangement has been minimal. Over the past three decades various Royal Commissions, government committees and advocacy groups have reported on the crisis in which Canada finds itself regarding child care services to children.

This crisis was recognized by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in its 1970 report. At that time, the Commission pointed out that parents require supplementary child care to allow them to fulfil both work and parental responsibilities.^{1,3}

The 1986 Report of the Task Force on Child Care and the 1988 Report of the (Senate) Subcommittee on Child Care both reinforced the necessity for strong Federal support and involvement in developing a national strategy on child care. The issues of affordability, accessibility, quality control and lack of care for infants emerged as the key concerns facing Canadian parents.

In 1988 the federal government proposed to implement a national strategy on child care designed to address the issues identified above. Advocacy groups assailed the initiative as piecemeal and provincial governments questioned the federal government's mandate regarding child care. Provincial government responsibility for all social services and education comes from the division of powers between these governments as set out in the British North America Act.

The federal government withdrew its proposed national strategy, to much dismay from child care advocates. They immediately lobbied the government to reinstate the strategy but without success. The only component of this multi billion dollar strategy to remain was the Child Care Initiatives Fund, (CCIF). The seven-year mandate of this fund was to support research and pilot projects focussed on child care services. The CCIF is currently in its 7th, and final year.

In November 1989 the United Nations adopted the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. As one signatory to the Convention, Canada has globally declared its responsibilities for its children. Section 18, subsections 2 and 3 of the Convention state:

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child - care services and facilities for which they are eligible.^{1,4}

These statements, while not legally binding, make moral commitments for which Canada must report upon to the United Nations; firstly after two years from the signing into agreement of the Convention, (January 1994 for Canada), then every five years thereafter, (Article 44 of the Convention).

To meet its commitments emerging from the U. N. Declaration, the federal government re-profiled its original funding commitment for the 1988 National Child Care Strategy to a new set of initiatives. The new strategy entitled 'Brighter Futures' covers a comprehensive set of initiatives ranging from mental health to parent support services. The strategy however does not include child care directly, rather it is an adjunct to services and programs directed at, high risk families and parents, mostly single mothers.

Further, the original set of initiatives laid out in 1988 included a special allocation of \$60 million for the development of First Nations' child care on reserve. This component was also scrapped much to the trepidation of the First Nations and the Assembly of First Nations.

The National Child Care Strategy was to provide \$60 million over six years to native communities for child-care facilities. It would not have resolved the real needs of all native children; the federal government dictated that it was for reserves where there was substantial numbers of working or student parents. Again it was to be funded by the federal government but under provincial jurisdiction, in spite of the fact that many reserves are ready, willing and able to develop and implement child care services. The monies, of course, will not be forthcoming because of the budget cuts.^{1.5}

The inclusion of native child care in federal initiatives however has not meant that all native children would benefit from these strategies;

"... the Indian Act definition of Aboriginal Peoples now called Indians has no basis in the historical self-identification or self-perception of Aboriginal Peoples. It is a unilaterally imposed administration convenience designed to limit and for much of its history to eliminate the number of people

who could legally be recognized as Indians with association benefits and rights.^{1.6}

Subsequent to the announcement of the Brighter Futures' program the federal government in 1994 announced that a national Aboriginal headstart program would be implemented. The focus of this national initiative had a new twist in that it was solely directed at the off-reserve population.

A Liberal government will begin an Aboriginal Head Start program on a pilot project basis, with the commitments of up to \$10 million in the first year of its mandate, up to \$20 million in the second year, up to \$30 million in the third year, and up to \$40 million in the fourth year. The program will be directed initially at Aboriginal families living in urban centres and large northern communities.^{1.7}

The implementation of this urban Aboriginal program will serve as the test whereby if it proves successful "could be expanded to serve other Aboriginal communities, reserves and non-Aboriginal children." (Liberal) Headstart however is only one part of the child care continuum; headstart would serve children approximately 0 to 4 years old meaning that the 5 to 6 year old children would still require caring services. Further, since kindergarten is inconsistent from province to province demands would have regional variations.

Children as such would continue to not have equal opportunities depending on place of residence, to access equitable educational and developmental services. Further, some children would be denied their right to achieve to their full potential, another value clearly expounded in the context of the U.N. Declaration.

Child care is an issue that will not go away simply because the necessity for such a service is multi-factored. It affects not only poor people but the middle class as well, it affects both single and two parent families, it affects children of all racial backgrounds and religious denominations and it affects the future potential of our country. It is an issue passionate to many people, representing all professionals, services and trades.

The development of child care in Canada needs to increase in the near future. As womens' laborforce participation continues to increase, as the rate of teenage motherhood continues to increase and as the rate of divorces and separations continue to increase the number of single parents, the demand for these services will remain. Lastly, as poverty and dependence on the social net remain high the need for early childhood development services will remain as a means of ensuring equity.

The realization of the long term positive impacts of quality child care, along with its educational advantages, have been advocated by many child care experts;

The findings of two longitudinal studies conducted in Sweden on the impact of centre-based child care, . At age eight, children entering child care before age one performed better than children with later entry, or who had no child care experience, on tests of cognitive functioning. They also received ratings from teachers which were more positive on social achievement and social-personal attributes such as persistence, independence and verbal ability.^{1,8}

The realization that child care is an investment in the future and not simply a womens' or a social service issue must occur. This realization is very strong in the Aboriginal world, primarily due to their child centred nature. Many Aboriginal advocates from political, social and other organizations have expressed their recognition that children are our future. The responsibility of ensuring their safe growth and development is the responsibility of parents and other adults, such as elders.

The development of child care in the Aboriginal world as an issue has been slower than in mainstream society. It has only been over the past ten years that Aboriginal people have begun to advocate for child care services that are culturally appropriate. The necessity for developing culturally appropriate services has received unqualified support from all sectors of the Aboriginal population.

Recognition of the merits of such services for their children, especially over the long term, has given cause for Aboriginal people to advocate on behalf of their children. Recent trends within the Aboriginal population to rediscover their traditions, languages and ways of life have strengthened their resolve to have culturally appropriate and culturally specific child care services. The fact that such services are being required as a means of targeting children first, rather than parental needs, reinforces the world view of Aboriginal peoples of being child centred.

The Aboriginal headstart program described earlier will begin a process that requires long term support. The negative impacts of 500 years of colonialization requires reversal; perceived commitments previously made to assimilate and destroy Aboriginal peoples must be revoked with the same level of commitment and determination as assimilation was pursued.

Correcting the negatives of the past will not occur overnight nor after one generation. It will require dedication on the part of Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people alike for decades to come.

Background

Native Peoples possess a distinct and unique value system manifest through customs and traditions which have been passed down from generation to generation in respective tribes. The most distinctive feature of tribal life was the central position of the child. Native Peoples firmly believe that children represent the primary means through which a culture can preserve its tradition, heritage, and language. Children are considered the trust of the past and the hope of the future.^{1.1}

Aboriginal societies placed special significance to their children. As the above quotation reflects, children ensured the continuation and survival of culture, language, beliefs and ways of life. Children were the link to the future and the people who would be in charge of the community later. It was important for Aboriginal parents to teach what they knew to their children and to take good care of them because in later years they would look to their children for care. As such, children and elders were cared for by the providers in the community, and the relationship between these two groups of people was encouraged by parents.

Aboriginal people fully realized that decisions made today would have impacts into the future; which; it is commonly understood that Aboriginal peoples considered potential consequences to seven generations into the future.

Children were cared for in groups, much as in a contemporary daycare, and attended to either by the mother, if she was available, or another woman at the site.^{1,2}

In pre-European days Aboriginal peoples had few, if any, child care problems. They had developed, over thousands of years, a system of child care that focussed on meeting the needs of children and not on meeting the needs of adults. While differences exist between all Aboriginal peoples in the on-going patterns of care, the focus was directed at the safety, security and development of the child.

Aboriginal peoples living in the Atlantic coast region of Canada were the first native peoples to experience contact with the explorers. Therefore, it has been for them, well over 400 years in which challenges have been made regarding their ways of life - including the care of their children. What appeared to the first Europeans as being a chaotic way of life was in reality a system designed from centuries of experience of living on this continent or as in Aboriginal belief, from time immemorial.

From their first arrival in North America, Europeans strove to replace the native culture with the values of Western Europe. The first missionaries were bewildered by the natives' individual freedoms and lack of (perceived) religious or political hierarchies.^{1,3}

It is well understood that many Aboriginal First Nation's societies were matriarchal, wherein women played a clearly significant role in the decision making process of the community.

In many Nations, women moved into positions of real power in the community, as (for example)

Clan Mothers, whose responsibilities it often was to choose the leader.^{1,4}

The matriarchal system ensured that children continued their significance in the society, with women in charge of running the community, children remained important and the focus of continued existence. The Aboriginal peoples of Atlantic Canada, the Micmac and Maliseet were matriarchal. The clash between their matriarchal system and the European patriarchal system had devastating impacts on these two First Nations. Almost immediately societal changes occurred such as role reversals for women and men. Women who were in charge of the decision making were no longer recognized by the Europeans' rather, they looked to the men as the leaders.

Such changes continued, eventually eroding other societal norms such as spiritual (religious) systems, language usage and cultural survival. Children and elders slowly lost the significance they had, and life began to revolve around the providers. As land and other resources diminished the community moved from one of self-reliance to one of dependence. The Micmac and Maliseet people experienced a technological upheaval moving them from a subsistence type of survival to a more technologically advanced, post-industrial society. The result is that it has taken the past five hundred years for Aboriginal peoples to begin to become equals with their European brothers and sisters.

As with any other topic dealing with Aboriginal peoples it cannot be looked at in isolation of other issues. In relation to child care other issues such as dependency, poverty, unemployment, residential schools, poor education and housing need to be considered. This paper will focus on the issues pertaining specifically to child care and in their proper usage the other issues will be incorporated.

What is child care?

In Aboriginal terms child care is more than the attendance to children when normal parental care is not available. Aboriginal people desire to have child care as a means of improving the potential for their children. It is a means of instilling pride, self-esteem, confidence and cultural ways in their children. For Aboriginal peoples it is a means to an end, the end being the preservation of language, traditions and ways of life. It is the means by which children develop pride and self-esteem when taught the values contained in the teachings of the Medicine Wheel; spiritual, cultural, emotional and physical.

As such Aboriginal child care is not limited to institutional type care nor does it occur only during working hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.. Rather, child care needs to be available at all times during all days. Aboriginal child care is all encompassing, meaning that the education of children can occur at all times, including play time. Learning then is not solely the responsibility of the natural parents or extended family, rather it can be from all others in the community. Care in a traditional sense means that everyone has a responsibility to look out for the best interests of the community's children.

While parents have specific responsibilities for nurturing, health and attention, others have responsibility to ensure that children do not harm themselves or others. The understanding of child care in the Aboriginal world view differs very much from the Euro-Canadian view.

In mainstream society child care may be differentiated in primarily two ways. Institutional care may be equated with legislated, also referred to as licensed or regulated, centre based or family day home care, usually provided during normal working hours, 5 days per

week. Non-institutional care may be exemplified by neighbourhood babysitting, required any time, every day at the expense and discern of the parent(s).

These types of child care do not imply or require that learning occur, rather it is simply looking out so that a child does not harm itself. Some institutional child care requires that learning occurs, such as in child development, pre-school and kindergarten centres. The development of these facilities is growing rapidly in Canada however, Aboriginal Peoples had used this methodology in traditional societies.

Native child care begins in the mother's womb. by talking to the unborn child, parents give it a basis of language before it comes into the world. Children in the womb were told of their fathers and mothers clan, religion and responsibilities and what they would see when they came into this world. Elders say Native Peoples did this long before subsequent research studies confirmed the benefits of this particular practice.^{1,5}

What is culturally appropriate child care?

Presently, the majority of child care programming in Canada is modelled on non-Aboriginal cultural values, traditions and knowledge. Mainstream child care therefore, is considered to be culturally inappropriate for Aboriginal children, as determined by their parents. Aboriginal parents have indicated that they prefer their children to be participating in child care programming which teaches Aboriginal culture, languages, traditions and values. Aboriginal parents would prefer that their children be cared-for by trained and qualified Aboriginal child care providers.

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Further, Aboriginal child care would include the meaningful participation of elders primarily as a means of re-establishing elders significance to children. Traditional foods, along with non-aboriginal foods are desired by Aboriginal parents.

The purpose of this culturally based service delivery is to create positive self-worth and a healthy personal perspective of the children. The short-comings of present mainstream child care, as perceived by Aboriginal people, includes an impression that it does not provide an opportunity for Aboriginal children to develop a positive self-image nor an opportunity to learn of their cultures and histories.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples with information regarding Aboriginal child care in Atlantic Canada. This includes, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland/Labrador.

Objective

The objective of this report is to investigate the state of Aboriginal child care in Atlantic Canada focussing on issues, services, and needs.

A review of existing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services will occur with respect to:

- the regulation of day/child care in each province,
- the availability of these services, on and off reserve and in mainstream society,
- the cost of accessing these services,
- other factors describing the delivery of these services,
- the Aboriginal need.

Overviews of Aboriginal Child Care in Atlantic Canada

A. New Brunswick

i. Background

Child care in this province is regulated under the Family Services Act, 1980, and the Family Services Act Regulations 1983, (amended 1992).

Admittedly, New Brunswick ranks amongst the lowest in many aspects pertaining to child care services including:

- within Atlantic Canada, it has the lowest day care subsidy rates, (\$12./day to \$14./day),¹
- the largest gap, at \$4., between the market cost of child care and the subsidized rate,
- parents here use regulated child care at a lower rate than parents in other parts of the country, less than 10% of pre-schoolers and between 2-3% school age use regulated child care, while 30% of parents use unregulated child care in this province,
- it is the only province to **not** have minimum staff qualification requirements as pre-requisite to work in regulated child care settings,
- it ranks lowest amongst the Atlantic provinces in staff qualifications with under one half having a post-secondary certificate, (third lowest in Canada),

¹source: **A Policy Framework for Child Care Services: A Review of the Child Care Review Committee, New Brunswick, 1994**

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- child care staff are paid on average at the rate of \$6.50 per hour, (second lowest in the country), as compared to the Canadian average of \$9.60 per hour.

In 1993/94 there were 850 full-time and part-time staff working in 227 day care facilities in New Brunswick. There were approximately 8,000 children being served of a total provincial population (0-12 years) of approximately 130,000.

The above referenced report goes on to provide details of two proposed models under consideration by the province regarding the future of child care services. Both scenarios present the means whereby the provincial government might eventually absolve itself of major funding commitments for child care programming. The province would retain legislated and regulatory authority for child care centres and family day homes, but the responsibility for ongoing operating expenses, including salaries, would be borne by parents.

This last statement however, may not be so much a change since, "Parents currently bear 95% of the cost of regulated child day care, with the remaining 5% being the provincial contribution in grants to child care facilities.", according to the "Report of the Child Care Review Committee", 1994.

The reported 1993-94 provincial expenditures on child care were \$6.56 million, while the parental contribution was estimated at being over \$22. million. Proposed changes to existing child care expenditures by the province of New Brunswick will adversely affect low income and high risk children the most. To avoid this, the province has re-profiled its operating grants contributions, \$1.2 million in 93/94 and directed these funds to subsidies.

The anticipated outcome of this move is to increase the number of subsidized spaces from a low of 527 at January 1994 to a projected

increase to 1070 by January 1995. As well, the province proposes to close the present \$4.00 gap between subsidies and market costs of child care. To achieve this, subsidy rates will increase from a range of \$12.-\$14. to \$15. to \$17.. Further full day subsidies will be available to families making less than \$15,000., up from \$11,600..

The loss of operating grants may be detrimental to the staffing of many centres, in that most rely on committed staff, earning very low wages. In essence then, child care workers subsidize the costs of operating a child care centre by being paid poorly while being required to provide quality care.

ii. Description of the Population Under Study

The majority of native people living in New Brunswick are of Micmac Nation and Maliseet Nation heritage. There are some Metis and Inuit Nation people residing here, however, for these two groups, as reported by 1991 census data, all are over the age of 15.

The reported² 1991 total Aboriginal population³ in New Brunswick was 5,300; with children 0-14 years of age representing 39% or 2,075 of this population. The populations on and off reserve are virtually equal at 2,710 and 2,595, respectively. Children in the 0-14 age grouping represent 34% of the on reserve population totalling 930 people, and 44% of the off reserve population totalling 1,140 people.

² Figures are to be used with caution as some Reserves did not participate in the data gathering of the 1991 census. The impact of this non-reporting will show a smaller population size than may have lived in this region. However, age group population percentages would not be adversely effected. For example; the 0-14 year age group percentage of 39% would remain virtually the same as if all reserves had reported.

³ source: 1991 Census, Statistics Canada

Further analysis of the off reserve population⁴ shows that almost 1,000 live in urban centres with approximately 300-400 children between the ages of 0-14 years, representing this population. This means that the majority of Aboriginal children and adults live in the rural areas of the province. These figures infer that a majority of Aboriginal people living in New Brunswick have less opportunity to access child care services.

Of New Brunswick's 227 child care centres, 127 (54%) are found in the urban centres of Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John. When the other four large centres are added to this total - 70% of the child care facilities are located in these seven locations. Since the majority of Aboriginal children live in the rural areas, the availability of regulated child care services, to them, is severely limited.

iii. Summary Analysis of Aboriginal Interviews

1. Off Reserve

There are no Aboriginal child care centres servicing the off reserve population in New Brunswick. The existing 227 centres are based on either English or French cultures. There are no statistics available regarding the number of Aboriginal children in these centres nor is it known how many Aboriginal people work in them. Aboriginal people however must access these services if they require such services for either, work, schooling or training. Very little, if any, Aboriginal culture is included in the programming of these centres.

⁴ Data available from the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage has been used in this report to assist in the presentation of a more detailed analysis of the provincial Aboriginal population. This data is not intended to compete with data available from Statistics Canada since data from the latter source is based on 1991 Census information.

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Issues such as accessibility, affordability and cultural appropriateness were the key issues facing the off reserve population. Since the majority of this population are found living in the rural areas of the province accessibility to existing child care services is seriously hampered. It would make little economic sense to travel 50 or more miles to place children into an existing child care facility. Given that this Aboriginal population is poor and earn low wages, affording child care is an issue, with the daily cost per child at approximately \$20. or \$100. per week.

In November 1992, the National Commission on Aboriginal Child Care, sponsored by the then called Native Council of Canada, (now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples), held two days of hearings in Fredericton. Over the course of these two days, representatives of the off reserve population informed the Commissioners of their needs, wants and desires. Representation to these meetings reflected all sectors of the province. (Note: In discussing the present day issues the researcher of this paper was informed by off reserve representatives that nothing has changed since 1992) Interviewees repeated the same outstanding issues, concerns and needs expressed in 1992. With the lack of development except the reforms being brought in by the province a review of the 1992 meetings follows.

At these sessions delegates informed the Commission that native cultural programming in existing child care facilities is needed. The cultural loss and alienation of the delegates themselves in their childhood was a reality they wished to correct for their children and grand-children. Further, representatives informed the Commission that native people need to be actively involved in all aspects affecting their childrens' lives including child care, education and municipal governments.

Regarding child care, delegates wished that they could create native child care programs which they would develop, design and

deliver. They wanted these centres to be staffed with qualified and properly trained native caregivers who were capable of teaching native and non-native cultures. Delegates did not want to necessarily isolate their children from other cultures rather they wanted to offer an immersion type program, teaching children their native culture first.

Their rationale for desiring cultural programming was that they wished for their children to have positive self-esteem, and pride in their culture. They did not want their children to be ashamed of themselves or their languages or heritage. They felt that by instilling positive values into their children they would be more likely to be successful in school and in finding employment. They also desired that their children could break the various negative cycles in which they currently live. These include, poverty, poor housing, high drop-out rates, poor education, low paying jobs, alcohol and drug abuse, family violence and poor job ready skills.

Delegates identified that elders need to be prominent once again. Through child care centre' programming children would be taught to respect their elders primarily through daily interaction between the two. Further, delegates informed the Commission of the special needs of single mothers, especially teenagers, disabled people and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)⁵ and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE) children. The lack of these services is greater than for all other children and definitely there is a need to develop programs that address these peoples' needs.

Making centres accessible for disabled people is required; single mothers require respite care; and teenage mothers require parenting skills courses along with support services at times of especially

⁵ FAS and FAE refer to the birth defects of children born to women who consumed alcohol during pregnancy. These include facial feature deformity, learning disabilities and behavioral problems.

high stress with their child(ren). None of these services existed then nor now for native peoples. There have not been any developments regarding the creation of native specific child care programs or services. Even in the revisions being implemented by the province it does not mention or allude to the needs of native children. In fact the lack of start-up funds and the loss of operating grants will mean that no native child care programs will ever be established without exceptional measures being invoked.

Given the nature of changes being implemented by the provincial government the issues identified by delegates in 1992 will probably exist well beyond the turn of the century. Given that the province is desiring that child care become a business venture it appears that native children will continue to exist in the negative life cycles in which they currently live. This will not change for generations, and possibly never. If there are no proactive developments on the part of the provincial and federal governments little hope exists for changes in the future.

Regarding the new federal headstart initiative there was cautious optimism about its potential impact. If the program is implemented it could mean the beginning of child care services for off reserve native children. Unfortunately, given the demographic reality of the high rural native population in this province it appears that a majority of native children would not benefit from this initiative. The off reserve hope is that as the program develops a broader scope will be incorporated whereby rural children may have equal access to these programs. Of course special needs children must be considered in this program.

The urban population however would welcome the opportunity to establish headstart programs in the near future. The need in New Brunswick is without question. They envisioned no problems in establishing parent committees; however, they did recognize that some parents may need to be trained in being a member of a Board of

Directors. They also recognized that staff would need to be properly trained and qualified. Training, is available through the New Brunswick Community College, (10 month certificate course in child care) and the University of New Brunswick, (4 year education degree in Early Childhood Education). Data was not readily available regarding the number of Aboriginal people in either program, however, it is believed that two native women graduated from the College course last year.

2. On Reserve

Of the 15 reserves in New Brunswick only one has a provincially regulated child care centre. Other reserves have headstart type programs that are mandated under the Tripartite Child Welfare Agreements signed between the Bands, the Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial Department of Community and Social Services.

These Child Welfare agreements established child and family service agencies on all reserves in the province. In signing these tripartite agreements the Bands agreed to fall within the governing acts and regulations of the provincial government. Within these, the Bands have developed various social service type programs designed to meet the social welfare needs of the community. The scope of services that agencies deliver includes: foster homes, child apprehensions, family and individual counselling, mental health services and adoptions. A tertiary support service of these is headstart. The target group for headstart includes: children who have been apprehended and placed in foster homes; from families who are experiencing family violence or other domestic problems; and children who are living in poverty.

Given the tertiary nature of the headstart programs they are not considered as child care facilities. Bands are reluctant to define them as child care programs because they do not recognize

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provincial authority as applying to them. The child welfare agencies operate independently of the provincial system, which in essence means that they are not accountable to the province for decisions made regarding children. The agencies however must appear before the provincial court to receive approval for involuntary custody cases.

On the one reserve where the headstart program has been changed to be a child care facility the Band, along with the non-native director, decided to fall within the provincial regulations. It is very unlikely that other Bands will follow since no additional resources or benefits are achieved from this action. Bands are not allowed to access the provincial subsidy program.

As such, (with the one exception), the situation is that there are no child care facilities on reserve. Child care is available only through informal arrangements made between adults wherein those requiring such services pay for the entire costs themselves. This applies equally to those who work, to those who are getting an education and to those living in poverty. The people who are suffering from this are the children, they are the ones being deprived opportunities children of other races enjoy such as developing pride, self-esteem and confidence.

While there is no regulated child care being provided on reserve, this population is far more organized than the off reserve population. In November 1992, 100+ representatives from all 15 reserves held a two day conference based on the theme, "Our Children, Our Traditions, Our Future". Over the course of the conference, workshops were provided focussed on program and curriculum content; human resource development; administrative and involvement (participation); and training issues. Panelists in each workshop presented information which they use in their daily involvement while providing services to children.

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The conference was the result of concerns recognized by the Directors of headstart programs from 11 Bands regarding the quality of life for children and women living on and off reserve. The purposes of the conference included: providing a forum where native and non-native women could come together to promote child care issues on and off reserve; begin to identify factors hindering native women from obtaining a high quality of life; to understand and formulate training needs; to form a provincial native child care coalition; and to provide an opportunity for networking and information exchange.

During the conference delegates formed the MicMac/Maliseet Child Care Council with each reserve having a representative. One member of this group was selected to participate on the Early Childhood Coalition Petite Enfance as a Board member. The goals of the Council include promoting public awareness of native child care issues, supporting and voicing concerns of native/aboriginal quality child care, and training issues.

Conference delegates advanced four recommendations including: 1) that this Child Care Council ensure that Native children receive quality care; 2) that this Child Care Council focus its efforts on: (a) training issues, (b) public awareness and education, and (c) act as advocates for Native Child Care issues; 3) that the MicMac/Maliseet Child Care Council hold its first meeting in January 1993; and 4) that the Early Childhood Coalition Petite Enfance continue to offer its assistance to help the Council meet its objectives.

The Early Childhood Coalition Petite Enfance organization is the non-native child care coalition in New Brunswick. Meetings, (focussed on training), between the 11 Bands having headstart programs and the N.B. Coalition started one year previous to the conference. The Coalition was pursuing legislated training requirements, and from this emerged a recognition of the lack of

culturally appropriate training models for native women.

In April 1994 the MicMac/Maliseet Child Care Council received funding from the Child Care Initiatives Fund, Health Canada to develop a Native Early Childhood/Child Care Diploma Training Programme. A subcommittee of the Council will oversee the development of this training program with one of the local post-secondary education institutions, possibly the University of New Brunswick.

A culturally relevant training programme designed to meet the needs of native people, tailored to the communities and allowing those who work to maintain their employment will be developed. The anticipated results of such training includes ensuring high quality child care is delivered to Native children. Culturally appropriate child care services will establish positive self-image and pride in native children.

Through this training the on reserve Native population hopes to begin the process of meeting their child care needs. Since there are no child care centres or programs on reserve, this training will begin to address the cultural education of native children. The achievement of obtaining this project funding is a clear demonstration of the empowerment of the coming together, through their Council, of the Native women in New Brunswick. The long term impact of this empowerment could mean very positive and significant changes for child care on reserve.

The Council plans to develop standards specifically designed to meet Micmac and Maliseet community realities. Their goal is to educate community decision makers making them sufficiently aware of the need for quality, culturally appropriate child care programming. They hope to influence the decision makers to the point of making children the first priority.

The Council recognizes that quality and culturally appropriate child care is a prime prevention measure. The long term impacts of positive child care means better schooling, better health, better employment, better parents, better communities and better families. The need for impressing decision makers at the community level, as with all other levels is the goal of the Council. They recognize that there needs to be a long term national strategy or policy framework designed to create high quality child development through proper child care programming.

The Council recognizes that traditional child care practices have a great deal to offer in terms of child development. The teaching of language, storytelling, the use of and respect for elders and the strengthening of parental responsibilities translates into a better future for native peoples.

iv. Summary Analysis of Non-Aboriginal Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the provincial government's Department of Health and Community Services, the federal Department of Indian Affairs, Regional Social Development office, the New Brunswick Child Care Coalition and the N.B. Community College.

As described earlier, the province ranks very low amongst other provinces regarding child care programming. Recent changes to child care in this province means that no start-up grants, (totalling \$1.2 million in 1993), are available due to a re-profiling of these funds to support more subsidized child care spaces. The impact of these changes means that virtually no opportunity exists for the native population to establish child care facilities or programs.

The province does not require child care programs to meet cultural requirements although all centres currently operating are either English or French culturally based. All children attending these centres are expected to participate in the programs offered. The

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province is not pro-active in promoting native heritage nor does it recognize that it has any authority over the reserves. Native people living off reserve are eligible to take advantage of the provincial subsidy program, however there is no information available regarding how many subsidized spaces native people utilize.

The proposed provincial changes are also designed to bridge the gap of actual costs and subsidies. Currently there is a daily costing gap of approximately \$4.00, with proposed changes implemented the gap will be reduced to \$2.00. Further, the income cut off has been raised from \$11,000. base income per annum to \$15,000. Such changes anticipate that more subsidies will be allocated this year increasing the number of subsidies from a low of 520 in January 1994 to a projected high of 1070 in January 1995.

The province is also re-examining its role in child care moving it from one of 'funder' to one of enforcer. Currently the province has no training pre-requisites or requirements for child care staff. They are however, anticipating the introduction of minimum requirements, over a three year period. Training requirements will include first aid and a 1 year child care certificate for the director or 1 in 4 of child care staff.

The province also wishes to be of assistance to parents in making informed choices regarding child care services. There are concerns pertaining to both licensed and unlicensed child care providers. The ratio numbers are of most concern especially regarding unlicensed care givers implying that quality is also a concern. For licensed centres, they may be required to publicly post infractions they committed as a means of regulating them for better services.

The Department of Indian Affairs has no jurisdiction regarding the development and delivery of child care programming. The federal mandate rests with the Department of Health, who are currently

administering the Brighter Futures program. The limitation of the Brighter Futures program is that it does not include a mandate for directly funding child care centres. Such service is funded as complimentary to the delivery of support programming such as parenting skills, family workshops and teenage support services.

The Indian Affairs department however, supports and recognizes the need for child care by including allowance guidelines for this service in various programs it transfers to Bands. It is then up to the Band to decide how the funds are utilized for the support of child care programming. For example, in the transfer of the post-secondary program, allowable student assistance items include child care/day care costs. As such, post-secondary students requiring this category of funding assistance are provided funds designed to meet or off-set the actual costs incurred.

v. Summary Analysis of Literature Review

Very little written information exists regarding aboriginal child care in New Brunswick. However existing documentation does reveal a huge need for child care and family support services.

A report prepared for the Native Council of Canada, now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, entitled, "New Brunswick Child Care Survey", identifies a shortage of child care spaces in urban areas. Further, spaces that are available are in non-aboriginal run child care centres, there are no aboriginal run or focussed operations. The focus of this report is directed at the off reserve population.

The preference of Aboriginal parents is to have their own child care centres designed to meet native cultural values. They also wish to have properly trained staff delivering these services but elders need to be involved in meaningful ways as well. Needs requiring address include: full time care during work or schooling hours; after school care; night care for shift workers; week-end

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care also for shift workers and students; respite care for single parents; cultural programming along with elders; and toy and book lending libraries.

The report concludes by making a number of recommendations under the categories of policy and procedure, program funding, subsidies, accessibility, legislation and policies, training, models of care, and transportation.

In summary the recommendations recognize the need for the development of culturally appropriate child care programs, designed controlled and delivered by Aboriginal people. Funding needs to be consistent, not just demonstration projects, and equally accessible for rural as for urban populations. More subsidized spaces are required and allocated in ways determined by Aboriginal people. Child care workers have to be properly trained to be capable of delivering high quality child care services.

Another document which is the report of the on reserve conference entitled, "Our Traditions, Our Children, Our Future" questions the quality of life for women and children living on and off reserve. The conference was developed to look at this question as well as to examine child care issues on reserve.

Through the conference the MicMac/Maliseet Child Care Council was formed with the mandate of empowering women to raise the profile of children to decision makers. The goal is to have children identified as the first priority by community decision makers. The majority of the content of this document is a reporting of the workshop and presenters commentary regarding various topics.

The first day of the conference began as a general meeting wherein the Council became established followed by a panel discussion focussed on the theme of training for child care workers - meeting our needs. The panel consisted of representatives from 3 post-

secondary institutes and 1 child care advocate. The University of Maine (U.S.A.) at Presque Isle offers a four year degree course majoring on child development; they are willing to modify programs to meet Aboriginal community and students' needs.

The New Brunswick Community College offers a ten month certificate course based on the philosophy of learning through play. The College tries to design programs that are conducive to the community and to the individual. The University of New Brunswick in Fredericton offers a four year degree program in Early Childhood Education, and the university would be capable of developing a program to meet native needs.

The day closed with a keynote address from a local native woman who has national and local experience. She described the difficulties she and other single native women parents face as well as the stereotypes they need to overcome. Despite these hurdles she completed her university degree.

The issues and circumstance my son and I faced are similar to those of many Native women; lack of information about daycare facilities; child care arrangements off reserve; lack of quality daycare that may instill a sense of cultural pride and identity and teach children their own language; dealing with violence, alcohol, drugs, and sexual abuse your child is potentially subjected to on reserve; and, dealing with cultural isolation and racism off reserve.¹⁻⁶

This quotation from her speech provides an excellent summary of her own life and the lives of thousands of native women across this country.

vi. Summary Analysis of New Brunswick Circumstances

The Aboriginal child care situation in New Brunswick is negative and positive. The fact that the MicMac/Maliseet Child Care Council was formed and that it has empowered native women is a good sign. The fact that the Council has received funding to develop a native focussed child care training program is also very positive.

On reserves the headstart programs do provide some form of child care in a cultural milieu. The lack of funding however is a major constraint as is the fact that children have not yet become the first priority of decision makers.

The situation on reserve should improve however, primarily due to the influence and determination of the Council. The Bands and the province have no formal relationship pertaining to child care, a situation that meets both parties positions. There is however a need to address the vacuum of subsidies on reserve, primarily as a means of maintaining the operations of a child care centre and improving the accessibility regarding number of spaces and costs. The development of self-government may address the lack of child care, depending upon the influence of the Micmac/Maliseet Child Care Council.

The situation off reserve is deplorable and certainly not as good as it is on reserve. Firstly, there is no similar group such as the Child Care Council and the province has no pro-active programs nor policies in place to foster the development of Aboriginal child care programs. Further, with the removal of the start-up grants there appears very little economic support through which Aboriginal peoples can establish new services. The only positive note is in regards to the proposed national headstart initiative coming from the federal government. While headstart is not child care it could mean the early implementation a native child care system, focussed on supporting native cultural values and developing pride in children.

vii. Conclusions and Recommendations

The willingness, energy and commitment to establish culturally appropriate child care programs on and off reserve is strong in the Aboriginal population. The lack of fiscal support is the missing ingredient.

Recommendation 1.

A national Aboriginal child care program be established with the mandate of developing on and off reserve child care programming.

Recommendation 2.

The national headstart program be implemented as quickly as possible with an expansion of its mandate to include on reserve as well.

Recommendation 3.

That recommendations 1 and 2 be developed in conjunction with Aboriginal people, throughout all phases, and that government fiscal commitment for both, be of a long term nature, similar to alcohol and drug prevention funding.

Recommendation 4.

That the Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) be given a new five year mandate to assist in the continuing development of Aboriginal child care.

B. Nova Scotia

i. Background

Child care in this province is regulated by the Nova Scotia Day Care Act and Regulations. The Day Care Services section of the Department of Community Services is responsible for the licensing and monitoring of day care throughout Nova Scotia. The Day Care Act and Regulations specifies the requirements for operating a day care program. No license is necessary for babysitting where six or less children of mixed ages are being cared. Also, no license is required if eight or less school age children are being cared.

Directors of licensed day care centres and at least two thirds of the staff are required to have a completed training program in early childhood education or its equivalent. Approved training is available at the Saint Joseph Children's Centre, Early Childhood Education Training Program; the Child Development Services Pre-School Program at the Nova Scotia Teachers' College, Froebel Institute; Kingstec Community College; the Nova Scotia Community College; and at the Mount Saint Vincent University, Department of Child and Youth Studies.

Equivalency is described as having grade 12 or General Education Development (GED) plus two years experience in a licensed day care plus successful completion of a full credit course focussed on the growth and development of children.

As of March 31, 1994 there were 185 full day licensed facilities operating in Nova Scotia. These centres offered a total of 7,126 spaces with an available total of 2,126 subsidized spaces. Staff ratios include 1:7 for children under five years and a maximum of 1:15 for care of children five to fifteen years of age. Recommended ratios however are 1:3 to 1:4 for infants to 12 months old; 1:3 to 1:5 for toddlers up to 25 months old; 1:4 to 1:6 for 2 and 3 year old and 1:7 for all other ages.

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The province of Nova Scotia provides a guide entitled, "Starting A Day Care Centre In Nova Scotia". This guide helps potential day care operators follow the correct procedure of establishing a centre. The guide takes people through the developmental steps while posing key questions which applicants should consider as they develop their proposal. Outlined are the basic requirements including health and fire safety, municipal zoning and incorporation of the name. Hiring process are outlined including training requirements, staff ratios, and the screening of potential staff. The guide also has sections dealing with finances, funding, the application process and license renewal process.

Daily charges for child care average approximately \$20./day to \$22./day. Provincial subsidy rates are \$16.50/day but with salary enhancement grants of \$3.50/day, the total subsidy fee is \$19.75/day. The salary enhancement grant is available to non-profit centres for parent(s) whose net income falls within the provincial subsidy guidelines. The income eligibility starts at \$16,500. and increases with the number of dependents. Start-up grants, one time only, are available but only for centres that are operating. Other grants that are available include; equipment at \$130./subsidized space; administrative grants for supervision of family day homes; grants for children with disabilities; and staff training grants.

Total provincial expenditure for all child care costs in 1991/92 was \$11,420,600., however federal entitlements of \$5,155,000. were re-imbursed to the province. No figures were available describing parental costs of child care services. Further, no figures were available to describe how many Aboriginal children were in existing full fee or subsidized spaces.

ii. Description of Population Under Study

The 1991 census reported that the population of Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia as being 8,815⁶ and of this the population children aged 0-14 years totalled 3,170. Of these, 2,130 live on reserve while 1,035 live off reserve. However, a recent survey conducted by the Native Council of Nova Scotia they identified that the 0-6 year old Aboriginal population was estimated at 1,415, with the total Aboriginal population being close to 22,000 people. Information available from the Department of Canadian Heritage⁷ appears to confirm the findings of the Native Council, and that the 1991 population for Nova Scotia was 22,035, with approximately 1/3 of this population living in the greater Halifax area.

The large majority of the Aboriginal population are of Mi'kmaq (Micmac) Nation heritage. According to census figures there were 225 Metis people and 50 Inuit. Of the Metis population 105 were children between the ages of 0-14 and of the Inuit population all were over the age of 15. All of these latter two groups live off reserve, (and for the purposes of this report are contained in the following aggregate off reserve population statistics).

Further analysis of the off reserve population, (all ages), shows that 50% live in the urban area with the other 50% living in rural areas. The urban population is reported as being 1,560 with the rural population, estimated at 1,590 people. However, the Micmac Friendship Centre in Halifax estimates that the urban population there is close to 4,000 people with about 35-40% being children, 0-14 years of age; inferring that 1,600 children live in this city.

⁶ Figures to be used with caution as some reserves may not have participated in the data collection during the 1991 census.

⁷ source: Aboriginal Origins: A Municipal Overview, Department of Canadian Heritage, 1994. Data provided in this report is intended to provide an overview of the numbers of persons reporting Native or Aboriginal origins in the 1991 Census.

iii. Summary Analysis of Aboriginal Interviews

The development of child care in Nova Scotia is occurring both on and off the reserve. Recent developments include a new child care centre operating on the Wagmatcook reserve with another centre being developed on a nearby reserve.

Further, the Micmac Friendship Centre in Halifax is set to open a child care centre in the Fall of 1994. In addition, it is presently recruiting and providing training for 10 family day homes set to begin delivering services also in the Autumn of 1994.

1. Off Reserve

As mentioned above the Micmac Friendship Centre is set to open a child care centre soon in Halifax. It has taken 3 years of commitment by the Centre staff and perseverance to be as close as they are presently. The Centre will also be operating 10 family day homes adding to the 25 spaces they will have available in the child care centre. Of the 25 seats, 15 will be subsidized through the province with the remainder being full fee seats. They will not have any special needs seats since there are approximately 20 spaces available province wide.

Over the course of the development of the child care centre the Micmac Centre has received strong support from provincial officials. Unfortunately, start-up grants are available only to centres that are in operation for at least one year. Such a policy creates a barrier which may stop initiatives but in the case of the Micmac Centre they have sought private assistance including the Catholic Church to make sure they get started.

The Micmac Centre may have to operate in a deficit situation just to get started, but with the start-up grants available and set at \$1,500. or \$100/subsidized space they could survive the first year. The start-up grant is a one time only grant and the province does not provide operating grants. Further no funds are available for renovations including those required by law or in accordance with fire safety.

Developing a new child care centre is complex because the operating regulations are under provincial responsibility and authority, however zoning regulations are metropolitan and fire regulations are federal⁸. This complexity of local, provincial and national regulations must each be met however, this process can be prohibitive to starting a new centre.

While the child care centre will provide basic child development services to children, the extent of the need for other services is greater than just care for children. There is a need for parenting and counselling services, for respite care services for single mothers, support services for single mothers, for life skills teaching and for upgrading. The Friendship Centre is able to meet some of these needs through other programs but the supply is far below the demand, especially for special needs children.

The focus of the programming at the child care centre will be on Mi'kmaq heritage and child development patterns. This includes strong components of language, culture, instilling pride and self-confidence, and the use of elders in all aspects. The development of the child will be the focus, not the provision of a service to a parent. The developmental aspects of this program are similar to the headstart programs operating in the United States.

⁸ The provincial fire marshall does have the authority to regulate over child care centres, however this office has opted to adhere to Federal fire regulations rather than establish codes of its own.

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The Native population living within the city experience many problems including violence, alcohol and drug abuse, low employment and poor wages, poor education, poor job ready skills, poverty and poor nutrition. Racism is very evident in the city especially by landlords who refuse to accept native tenants in many buildings. It is also difficult for native people to get good employment or to get an appointment for a job interview. The Friendship Centre does offer assistance for native people who are going for interviews acting as employment reference for the native population.

As mentioned earlier, the Friendship Centre will also be operating 10 family day homes. The administration and training for these people will be the responsibility of the Friendship Centre. Given the large estimated Aboriginal population size in the greater Halifax/Dartmouth area, the 35 spaces assigned to the Friendship Centre's child care service is far short of meeting the needs of nearly 1,600 Aboriginal children. While the need is definitely more significant than can be met, the attitude of Friendship Centre staff is that at least there is a beginning and a base upon which to grow and expand.

Across the province the need is there as well, which is why the Native Council of Nova Scotia (NCNS) recently applied for federal funding under the Brighter Futures, Community Action program for Children. NCNS is the provincial political organization responsible for the off reserve population. Prior to submitting their proposal the organization conducted an extensive three month survey with its constituents. The proposal states:

The research conducted demonstrates that this population (1,001 families and 1,415 children, ages 0-6) is not adequately served by either on-reserve family services, or services offered to the general non-Aboriginal population.

The NCNS estimates that there are approximately 21,000 Aboriginal people living in Nova Scotia with approximately 15,000 living off reserve. The magnitude of the problem is far greater than really known. Much like their counterparts living in Halifax the rural population is confronting social, health and housing issues of their own. Off reserve Aboriginal people have been pushed to the fringes of society participating only as non-aboriginal people see fit and being excluded at will.

The same problems of poor education, poor job skills, isolation, alcohol and drug abuse, a rising number of single teen-age mothers, an increase in single parents, high unemployment, high social assistance dependency add to the despair many Aboriginal adults confront daily. Breaking the cycle is paramount however with federal and provincial governments denying responsibility for the health and welfare of these peoples the end of the cycle is far away.

Regarding the proposed federal headstart initiative both the Friendship Centre and the NCNS are being prudent about their enthusiasm. They recognize a definite need for these services although they will not meet all child care needs. They will meet some of the need, and for the Friendship Centre this program could be the key source of funding it requires to ensure that their child care program becomes operational.

Headstart is only one part of the child care continuum. Other aspects include afterschool care, night care for shift workers and students, support services for single parents such as respite care and lifeskills, and the care of children at other times. The developmental aspect of headstart is of significance since the program focusses on developing the child's skills at learning and not on filling-in the time between when the child is dropped-off at the centre and picked-up later. However the potential impact of headstart will be minimal or possibly negated if conditions at home

remain as negative influences on the child(ren). Support programs for parents may need to be delivered such as positive parenting courses, upgrading, lifeskills, technical skills or other programs designed to create positive alternatives for parents to change their lifestyles.

2. On Reserve

Throughout Nova Scotia several reserves have kindergarten, pre-school or headstart type services in existence. The curricula are similar to the one operating on the Membertou reserve where the focus is directed at preparing four year old children for their attendance in school. Along with teaching Micmac culture children are supported to enjoy special events such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas.

In addition, children learn about fire safety, poisons, about their senses, and they have special treats for their birthdays. As such their education is comprehensive but not isolated. One of the arguments or criticisms made about native only child care centres is that they would segregate native children from mainstream society, a concern questioned strongly by native people. The program on the Membertou reserve teaches Micmac culture as an ongoing part of its curriculum: twice a week the children bring out their Micmac colouring books, drums and have mini-pow wows on these occasions. The girls wear shawls and head bands with the boys wearing head bands and jingle straps on their ankles.

Children have a circle time where they sing songs, have finger play, dances, and story time. They also learn math, colours, shapes, water and sand play, manual dexterity, alphabet, painting and crafts. As evidenced by the above description the program is very comprehensive and deliberate so that all aspects of the child's developmental needs are met. When looking at the four directions of the medicine wheel the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional needs are met in this program.

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Through funding provided by the Child Care Initiatives Fund of Health Canada, two Resource Centres have been established by Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services. The Centres provide toy, book and video lending on an outreach basis to First Nation communities in the province. The Family Resource Centres have programs such as 'Hooked on Phonics', and they offer workshops on topics such as AIDS, parenting skills, lifeskills and family oriented activities.

Parenting workshops are available on most reserves since they are delivered by staff of Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services, the province wide native child and family service agency for the on reserve people. The parenting workshops have been successful. The workshop runs over a four or five week period, depending on participant wishes. Topics such as parent-child communications, how to discipline, losing control and respect are examined over the workshop time period. Workshops began in September 1993 through funding from the Child Care Initiative Fund, Health Canada. With funding for this project set to end in June 1994, the Mi'kmaq Agency agreed to continue the employment of the two staff who are operating the Family Resource Centre and delivering the workshops.

The target groups for the workshop are single parents, and teenage mothers. In general, there is a recognition that parenting skills are very poor in the native population, resulting primarily from the impact of residential schools and the loss of respect, especially for elders.

One reserve recently opened the first native run and operated day care centre in Nova Scotia. The Wagmatcook Day Care, with its staff of five provides child care programming to 21 children from the reserve. Initially, funding was received from the CCIF to support the development of a demonstration project in the community. Through a needs assessment the reserve proved, mainly to itself, that a child care program was needed. Following the needs assessment, development of the program began.

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At the outset the reserve recognized that a training program meeting their needs would need to be created. The desire of the Band was that their child care workers have equal qualifications to others working in the child care field. To accomplish this they worked with St. Joseph's College Children's Centre, a provincially approved training facility, in adding Micmac cultural knowledge to their existing curriculum.

Further, the college was willing to deliver the program on-site as opposed to unnecessarily requiring students to travel from the reserve to the St. Joseph's, approximately 3 hours each way. The instructors come to the reserve to deliver all of the courses with the students graduating with a one year Diploma in Early Childhood Education.

The centre provides child care to children 1-4 years of age and staff are presently developing a Mi'kmaq curriculum for child care centres. The Wagmatcook program operates on the holistic development philosophy, in accordance with the teachings of the medicine wheel. Mi'kmaq is the only language spoken to the children at the centre and the activities are based on the oral language heritage of the Mi'kmaq nation. In addition to child care, the centre also offers kindergarten and afterschool services.

The development of childrens' programming is moving forward throughout the entire Mi'kmaq Nation. Centres, programs and services are being developed on and off reserve. There is a certain creativity and commitment evident amongst the Mi'kmaq. Their devotion to re-establish the strength of their culture their children and to re-vitalize their Nation, especially for the future, is remarkable. A brighter future appears to await the Mi'kmaq Nation primarily through their present investment into their children. Instead of just proclaiming that their children are their future they are demonstrating it through their actions of protecting and strengthening their children.

iv. Summary Analysis of Non-aboriginal Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the provincial Department of Community Services, Day Care Services branch and the federal Department of Indian Affairs, Social Development sector.

The provincial government is very supportive of the developments occurring on and off reserve throughout the province. While they have no jurisdiction regarding on reserve developments they have been invited to participate and to advise Bands regarding health and fire safety regulations. In most cases bands have decided that they will exceed provincial standards for buildings and facility requirements. The relationship between the Mi'kmaq Nation and the provincial authority has been positive, with both parties realizing that provincial jurisdiction does not include reserves, they have however decided to work together, in the best interests of the children.

The provincial government has also been very supportive and cooperative with the Micmac Friendship Centre in Halifax. Here provincial jurisdiction does apply and although it has taken three years to progress to the present point, support and advice has been provided by provincial officials. It appears that the Friendship Centre has more struggles with the city, regarding zoning, then with provincial regulations. Various neighbourhoods have voiced opposition to the locating of a child care centre in their area, however the centre has secured a building not far from downtown and the Centre itself.

On the federal side, the Department of Indian Affairs does not have a mandate which covers day care or child care. The Federal responsibility centre for this lies with Health Canada. Indian Affairs Departmental officials recognize the developments occurring in Nova Scotia, and support them in ways that are possible.

Through training, education and social service support programming inclusions are made for participants/recipients to offset the costs of child care services. In this way Bands or other organizations are able to calculate how much of the Band's allocations can be utilized for support of various childrens' services. With greater Band control being exercised the Chief and Council are able to allocate and identify certain funds for kindergarten, headstart and child care within justified expenditure categories.

Department of Indian Affairs authority in the social welfare area is realized through the general welfare agreements and the tripartite child welfare agreement. The general welfare agreement pertains to welfare payments made to First Nations citizens living on reserve. The tripartite agreement, made between the Bands, the province of Nova Scotia and the federal government, oversees that development of child and family services on all reserves in the territory. The model utilized here is of a central agency type. The head office is located on the Shubenacadie reserve with a sub-office located in Cape Breton on the Eskasoni reserve. From these offices, and from offices established on each First Nation community social workers deliver all programming and services including; child welfare services, adoptions, foster homes and apprehensions. Further, family support services are provided such as parenting workshops, family counselling, mental health assessments, sexual abuse therapy, and family therapy.

In addition to these services the Mi'kmaq Agency also operates two Family Treatment centres that provide shelter and safety for women and their children. The Shelters also provide counselling and support services, outreach services, and counselling support to male perpetrators of family violence.

Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services works with other programs as well including: alcohol and drug prevention programming, alcohol and drug treatment centres, Community Health Representatives

(CHR's), community health nurses and the local police protection services. Cooperation through these relations ensures that all community programs operate in a unified manner. The pooling of limited resources makes each program more effective and the delivery of services consistent.

v. Summary analysis of literature review

No applicable literature was found.

vi. Summary Analysis of Nova Scotia Circumstances

The development of child care services and programs on and off reserve in this province has witnessed the opening of the first day care on reserve and soon in Halifax. Despite the lack of a federal initiative or solid provincial support child care services are being designed by the Mi'kmaq people. They have consciously set their childrens' best interests at the forefront of new developments.

They are making a concerted effort to ensure that their children know their heritage, language and past. The future for these children should be filled with pride, confidence, positive self-esteem and self-image. They will know their past and be proud of their Nation's heritage.

The myriad of services being delivered and centres being developed, on reserve, ensures that this population has some equal access to resources currently enjoyed by other races of children. Catching-up to mainstream society, in terms of resources, will take more time and commitment but this should occur in Nova Scotia.

With community programs working together to achieve the same goals communities will have consistent resource people who deliver the same message and who are available for the same purpose. The

Mi'kmaq people are proving, to themselves, that they can do what they set out to accomplish. They still recognize however that governments also have responsibilities, especially in safeguarding their treaty rights. This issue has been a rallying focus for the Mi'kmaq Nation who annually celebrate treaty days.

Governments have responsibility for all Aboriginal peoples, but only in regards to what Aboriginal peoples decide these responsibilities include. The Mi'kmaq Nation has progressed a long way from the days of residential schools; their healing is well under way as evidenced by their capability to re-establish the significance of their children, their language and their heritage.

vii. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion what needs to be reiterated is the progress made by the Mi'kmaq Nation in achieving their healing. A great deal of destruction has occurred over the past five hundred years, but the commitments being made today by these people in safeguarding their children is a move to safeguarding the future. What happened in the past has happened; the correction of this human destruction is occurring within the Mi'kmaq Nation, especially in their own communities.

The healing is happening both on and off reserve. It appears that the off reserve struggle is greater because of population dispersement but mostly because of the jurisdictional quagmire in which these people exist. The provincial government deals with them as only another part of the general population but they do not yet possess the same levels of culturally appropriate services as do other races living within the province of Nova Scotia. However, the Mi'kmaq Nation perspective is that, the past is the past, and now is now; nevertheless, the future is in our hands and growing-up around us, we are responsible to make sure the future is better - for our children and grandchildren - seven generations hence.

Recommendation 1.

That the federal government's headstart initiative be activated as soon as possible.

Recommendation 2.

That a comprehensive national child care strategy be developed and that components for on and off reserve Aboriginal peoples be included as part of the final package, in consultation and approval with all Aboriginal people.

Recommendation 3.

That governments and other decision makers recognize that child care is not a luxury but that it is a necessity to those working, going to post-secondary schools and to those seeking skills development or employment.

C. Prince Edward Island

i. Background

Child care in this province is governed by the Child Care Facilities Act, Regulations and Guidelines, 1988. Regulated child care services include, early childhood centres (kindergarten, nursery school and group care), school-age child care centres, occasional centres and family day homes.

Early childhood centres are defined as facilities, "whose primary objective,..., is to provide relatively informal care emphasizing family oriented activities for children".⁹ Family day care homes are, "private homes providing informal care emphasizing family oriented activities for children".¹⁰ Occasional centres are facilities where care is provided to individual children on a one time basis or on irregular hours.

The recommended staff to child ratios are: 1:3 for children 0-2 years of age; 1:5 for children 2-3 years; 1:10 for children aged 3-5 years; 1:12 for children aged 5-6 years and 1:15 for children 7+ years old. Regarding staff qualifications, centre supervisors and one full-time staff member must each have at least a 1 or 2 year early childhood development diploma or a university child study degree. Additionally staff are required to take 30 hours of in-service training every three years.

There are no start-up or capital grants available from the provincial government for child care centres. Operating grants are

⁹ source: Child Care Facilities Acts, government of P.E.I., 1988

¹⁰ Ibid.

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based on a costing of \$0.91/day/space¹¹ for full day programs. For part-time centres, (including kindergartens, nursery schools and school-aged child care), the range includes: \$682.50/year with 12 or fewer children; \$1,092.00 for centres with 24 or fewer children; and \$1,820.00 for centres with 50 or fewer children. Family day homes are eligible for an operating grant of \$450.00/year.

Other grants available include: infant incentive grants for care of children under 2 years old; special needs grants to cover wages of staff caring for children with special needs; and education/professional development grants for staff advancement.

In fiscal year 1991/92 the province of Prince Edward Island spent \$2.7 million on child care services but it was reimbursed by the federal government a total amount of \$912,000. The mean average hourly rate for child care staff was \$7.73 equalling approximately \$16,000/year.

The average monthly fees for infants was \$530., for preschool children \$375, and for school age children \$150.. The province has identified 5 broad principles upon which child care is based. These are quality, affordability, accessibility, providing for children with special needs and parental involvement.

In 1992 there were a total number of 1,756 full-time child care spaces and 2,293 part-time spaces at approximately 100 centres. There were 74 family day home spaces, for a grand total of 4,123 spaces. There were 50 children with special needs and of the children in care 391 were subsidized by the government.

¹¹ source of data this page: Child Care in Canada. University of Toronto, 1993

ii. Description of the Population Under Study

The 1991 Census reports that the total Aboriginal population in the province of P.E.I. was 570, with 200 living on reserve and 370 living off reserve. Further analysis of the off-reserve population shows that 190 live in urban areas and 180 live in rural areas. Of the on reserve population 65 were children under the age of 14 while for the off reserve population 140 were in this age group.

Statistics available from the federal Department of Canadian Heritage report that the 1991 provincial total Aboriginal origins population in P.E.I. was 1,890. Of this population 310 are reported as living on the two reserves with the remainder, 1,580 living in various communities throughout the province. According to these figures 225 live in Charlottetown with approximately 425 native people living in and around Charlottetown. (Age breakdowns not available from these statistics)

iii. Summary Analysis of Aboriginal Interviews

Presently, there are no Aboriginal child care facilities operating anywhere in P.E.I.. Aboriginal parents seeking such services must purchase them from the existing mainstream child care facilities.

1. Off Reserve

In 1990 the Native Council of P.E.I., a provincial political organization representing off reserve Aboriginal people, submitted a proposal to the Child Care Initiatives Fund, (CCIF), of Health Canada. In their proposal they identified:

In 1989 a series of workshops on Native child care issues were held in Charlottetown. Parents expressed concerns about the steady

erosion of language and culture in the Native community. It was decided that the establishment of a Micmac Child Care Centre which emphasized Micmac culture would greatly benefit native children and the community. It was also suggested and agreed that an after school program be included in the curriculum. It was therefore proposed that the Native Council of Prince Edward Island establish a Native Child Care Centre which will provide quality child care while preserving Micmac culture and language.

It is now 1994, no centre was established and no funding approved for this project. The proposal offered to establish a quality child care program designed to meet child care needs of working parents and an afterschool program as well. Regarding curriculum the focus would be on Micmac culture but it would, "also enable children to develop the listening, speaking, cognitive and social skills which enable them to succeed in the regular school system", according to the proposal.

Other goals of the proposed centre included developing Aboriginal childrens' pride and self-esteem, providing a place for school age children to go to after school, and helping to preserve the culture and language of the Micmac Nation. The centre's program would have developed the child's skills and provided them with an equitable opportunity to succeed in school and in life. A mixture of traditional education, use of elders, parental involvement and nature field trips would have provided strong basics for the children. Unfortunately this never came to be a reality.

This situation has remained the same for the off reserve population in P.E.I.. They are forced to access, when possible, existing child care spaces that do not promote Micmac culture and offer nothing to help build pride and self-esteem in the Native children. Further, parents seeking support and assistance must access services from non-aboriginal people who deal with them from their value perspective and not from the native position.

The Native Council of Canada's, National Commission on Aboriginal Child Care conducted hearings in P.E.I. in November 1992. The Commissioners heard that there is a need in the province for Aboriginal run, designed and culturally appropriate child care programs. Participants explained that they prefer native child care because then they would know the people looking after their children and they, as parents, would feel secure that the children are in a safe place.

Participants also explained that there was a high number of teenage pregnancies on the Island and that many teenagers have to quit school because of the lack of affordable child care, or child care at school. There is also need for respite care services where parents, especially single parents, would be able to take a mental health break from their children. It was suggested this would also be of benefit to children. Participants expressed sadness that the extended family and traditional family are no longer valued. In the past the extended family, especially grandparents, would provide child care but now this seldom occurs. Fathers, in many cases, do not accept responsibility for their children often leaving the mother to fend for herself and her child(ren). This was not the pattern in traditional societies.

Participants stated that many times when single mothers seek opportunities to better their lives either through education or seeking support services, they encounter a hostile, racist social service system where native children are not properly treated. The

need to establish social support systems is necessary as well. The Native Council of P.E.I. did offer a parenting skills development program entitled, "Nobody's Perfect", however funding ended recently and it appears that the program will not be funded soon. When the program was operating it targeted single and teen mothers and it was considered a success, however project funding was of short time duration and not renewed, a common reality for many native projects.

Recently, the provincial government invited the Native Council of P.E.I. and the P.E.I. Native Women's Association to submit proposals under the auspices of the Community Action Component of the Brighter Futures program, Health Canada. The focus of the initiative was towards establishing parent support programs, headstart, and parenting programs.

The Native Women's Association proposal was selected and they will soon begin work on their three year project. The Association will use the assistance of a neighbouring reserve in New Brunswick to provide assistance in designing a headstart program as an adjunct to support programming for single and teen mothers. The Association has selected Charlottetown as the location for this program because the largest population and need exist there.

Charlottetown is also the location where the highest concentration of mainstream support services are located. A goal of the project is to link with existing programs, rather than duplicate services, to provide services to Aboriginal women. Through the project the Association will provide cultural sensitization to non-aboriginal service agencies. The perspective of the Association is that working with existing service providers is efficient and can be as productive as developing new services. The missing element is cultural sensitivity by the staff of these organizations.

The Association has determined that sensitization sessions and/or part-time employment of Aboriginal people in these organizations is the proper route to providing appropriate services to Aboriginal women. Their three year project is designed to build bridges between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. At the same time, it will make services to Aboriginal women more effective and appropriate. Further to these services the project will realize the development of toy and book lending libraries which will provide mobility services one day per week.

Another service to be developed is a safehome for Aboriginal women. The P.E.I., Native Womens' Association has decided to establish this service instead of a transition home, primarily based on experiences of other transition homes in Nova Scotia¹² and New Brunswick. Usage of transition homes, in these provinces, has diminished with the homes operating mostly vacant through the year.

Unfortunately the project will not directly address child care needs but it will be a beginning. The development of culturally appropriate services to some children, especially those at most risk, will be designed. The program will be integrated because Micmac is not spoken by many on the Island, and the cultural ways will need to be re-created through help from other reserves. The programming will focus on aspects of the Medicine Wheel, focussed on the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development of the child.

¹² Native programming in Nova Scotia does not use transition homes as the focus is on family and community education coupled with a strong emphasis on men's programming. Progressively, these programs will include weekend and wilderness retreats infused with strong components of culture, and traditional knowledge and values.

2. On Reserve

There are no child care programs operating on either of the two reserves on the Island. There is a kindergarten program operating on the Lennox Island reserve.

However, according to the Native Women's Association there is a need on both reserves for child care centres. The Association represents Aboriginal women living on and off reserve on the Island. The lack of child care services places Aboriginal children developmentally behind other children who can access these services.

Unfortunately the reserves in this province have not been actively involved in the development of childrens' services to any great extent. The Native Womens' Association will be attending upcoming meetings of the New Brunswick Child Care Council beginning in July 1994.

iv. Summary Analysis of Non-Aboriginal Interviews

Interviews with the provincial Department of Health and Social Services and the federal Department of Indian Affairs were conducted.

From a provincial government perspective they have no jurisdiction over reserves as such, and they have no involvement with services available on the reserve. Regarding the off reserve population nothing has happened except for the recent approval of the Native Women's Association proposal. However, even here the funds for the program are federal under the Brighter Future's Program, Community Action Component.

The provincial government has been reluctant to recognize the special social welfare needs of the off reserve population relegating them to accessing culturally inappropriate services. The wishes of the off reserve population are clear - they want to develop services and deliver these services to their own people in a culturally appropriate manner. The service providers must respect the people seeking assistance and treat them with care and concern.

However, no special provisions or considerations have ever been made within a provincial social service context and it appears likely this will prevail, especially from a fiscal perspective. The off reserve Aboriginal population in P.E.I. will not benefit from provincial social programs in the ways they determine, rather they are forced to accept what exists and to fit into what is already there.

The province however is supportive of the off reserve population through economic development and alcohol and drug programming. The province provides funding for these areas and it participates in the tripartite negotiations taking place pertaining to self-government.

The Department of Indian Affairs has no jurisdiction or mandate over child care services. Presently the Department is pursuing, along with the Lennox Island Band and the provincial government, a process to create dual bilateral agreements dealing with child welfare issues. This move is in line with the development of greater local control of the funding available for these statutory services. The institution of dual bilateral agreements, between the Band and the province and the Band and Indian Affairs will replace the existing, single, bilateral agreement between the province and the Department.

Through these agreements the Band will have greater control and negotiation power with the province for services to children coming into contact with the social welfare system¹³. The Band will be able to hire case workers, at its discretion, who would co-determine a case plan for children who have been apprehended. Presently, the Band has no mechanism whereby such involvement can occur; further, the funds will be in control of the Band government.

v. Summary Analysis of Literature Review

The only applicable literature included three reports focussed on the off reserve child care situation.

These include:

- Native Council of Canada, Native Child Care Research Project For the Province Of Prince Edward Island, native Council of Canada, Ottawa, unpublished, undated.

This research provides an overview of the child care needs and issues pertaining to the off reserve population of the province. A review of the legislation is undertaken plus the results of community interviews.

- P.E.I. Nitapjij Child Care Centre Proposal, The Native Council of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, 1990.

The proposal outlines the rationale for establishing a native child care centre in the Charlottetown area. The proposal was the result of a series of workshops undertaken in 1989 by the Native Council. The needs and proposed services are explained.

¹³ This refers primarily to the child welfare system, including adoptions, apprehensions, foster care and family support services such as parenting counselling, alcohol/drug counselling.

- The report of the National Child Care Commission, Atlantic Provinces Hearings, Native Council of Canada, Ottawa, unpublished, 1992.

These reports provide summaries of presentations made to the Child Care Commission during a series of hearings held in November 1992. Testimony of presenters and other participants form the basis of the reports.

vi. Summary Analysis of P.E.I. Circumstances

Given the current situation in P.E.I. things can only improve regarding child care services. Since there are presently no child care programs on or off reserve, and since there appears to be serious concern on the part of native parents and politicians the situation could change. It is impossible to identify a time frame. However, the developments occurring in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for the Mi'kmaq Nation the results of these efforts could be felt in P.E.I..

The off reserve population size is significant enough to warrant child care centres in and around Charlottetown and possibly for Summerside. Family day homes may be the answer for other rural areas, thereby meeting some of the needs.

On the two reserves the possibility of child care programs or centres opening sooner than off reserve is possible. Bands already receive funding for various programs and with the move to self-government they will have greater control of how funds are utilized. The Department of Indian Affairs is turning control over to Bands for most of the funding and the eventual dissolution of the Department will mean full control.

vii. Conclusions and Recommendations

The need for aboriginal, culturally appropriate child care programs and centres exists in this province. Such programs are required to help in developing Micmac children to be knowledgeable of their culture and language. There is a need to instill pride and self-esteem in these children, thereby affording them an opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

Aboriginal children in this province have no means, in formal settings, of being able to learn their heritage since existing child care centres and schools do not teach these topics. Aboriginal children as such are being denied equal opportunities for developing pride, confidence and self-esteem, that other children enjoy. They do not have an equal chance of succeeding in school and little opportunity of breaking dependency cycles. Teenage mothers require strong support if they are to complete their schooling; they must also have the choice of seeking help from a native or non-native organization.

Recommendation 1.

In light of the need to establish child care centres on and off reserve in Prince Edward Island, a national child care strategy, needs to be established that recognizes and accommodates for the needs of all Aboriginal peoples.

Recommendation 2.

Self-government negotiations and the devolution of the Department of Indian Affairs be accelerated to meet the requirements of the Band governments.

Recommendation 3.

That all parties, federal, provincial, and Aboriginal work together to develop a comprehensive national strategy dealing with all aspects of Aboriginal childrens' lives.

Recommendation 4.

That equity of access for off reserve Aboriginal peoples regarding self-government and all other federal programs be recognized.

Recommendation 5.

That funding of Aboriginal projects, from the Federal and provincial governments be for a long term. Presently, pilot and demonstration projects limit the impact of services and they usually build up expectations that cannot be met over a long period of time.

D. Newfoundland and Labrador

i. Background

Child care in this province is regulated through the Day Care and Homemaker Services Act, 1990, and the Day Care and Pre-school Licensing Requirements. Regulated child care includes day care homes and school-age child care. Day care centres provide care for children from the age of 2 years to 12 years. Care in these settings may be full or part-time. School-age care is centre based care outside school hours, before and after, for children up to 12 years of age. There is no regulated child care for infants or family day homes.

In Newfoundland/Labrador there are no grants of any type offered by the provincial government for child care services. Eligibility for subsidies are based on an income or needs test. Working parents are assessed for eligibility based on an income test, with full subsidy available at incomes as low as \$9,960. for a single parent with one dependent. The eligibility of parents on social assistance is determined in accordance with a needs test and primarily in view of the child requiring child development assistance.

Provincial regulations require that centre supervisors have either a 1 year certificate in Early Childhood Education (ECE), plus one year experience, or a 2 year diploma, with no additional work expectations detailed. If there are more than 25 children in the centre, (50 is the maximum), then another staff must have supervisory qualifications.

Recommended staff-child ratios are 1:6 for children 2-3 years old; 1:8 for children 3-6 years old; and 1:15 for children 7-12 years old. These ratios apply to groups up to a maximum of 25 only. If there are more than 25 children present two rooms must be used to divide the group to meet the ratios.

The province does not keep records of the number of Aboriginal children in child care; therefore it is not known how many Aboriginal children benefit from existing services, either full fee or subsidized spaces. Further, it is not known how many Aboriginal people may be working in existing child care programs.

In 1992 there was a total of 3,568 spaces available in the province. The provincial expenditure for child care in 1991/92 was \$1.6 million, however the federal reimbursement was just over \$1.0 million. The above expenditure figures indicate that the Newfoundland government either does not have sufficient funds to support the operational costs of child care, or otherwise it might imply that the province does not place high priority on these services nor on the needs of children in general.

ii. Description of the Population Under Study

The Aboriginal population of this province has significant numbers of Indian, Metis and Inuit.

According to 1991 census figures there were 3,490 North American Indians; 2,080 Metis people; and 4,715 Inuit people. Regarding the on reserve population there were 470 on the one reserve, Conne River, with a proportion of 0-14 year old children at 25.6% or 120 individuals.

Off reserve the total population was 9,560 made up of 3,020 Indian people; 2,080 Metis people; and 4,715 Inuit people. Of the Indian population children 0-14 made up 40.6% or 1,226 individuals. For the Metis population children in the 0-14 age group numbered 707 or 34%. Amongst the Inuit population, children for this age group made up 39.1% (or 1,844) of this population.

Data available from the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage reports that the 1991 total Aboriginal population for Newfoundland/Labrador was 13,225, however, population size according to age groupings was not available from this source. This data does indicate that the largest Aboriginal population concentration is found in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay region, totalling 2,220 people with the majority of this population being Inuit at 1,710 people. The next largest Inuit population was reported to live in Nain at 945 people.

The largest concentration of Metis people is found in Happy Valley-Goose Bay at 225 people. St. John's, the largest city in the province, has a total reported population of 775 Aboriginal people.

iii. Summary Analysis of Aboriginal Interviews

Presently, there is only one Native provincially regulated child care centre operating in Nain, Labrador; there are no other Native child care centres operating in the province.

1. Off Reserve

Recently the Aboriginal population in Corner Brook received federal approval to deliver child care and parenting support services to the population living in and around the area. The 1991 census reported population for this location is 340 Aboriginal people. However, in discussion with local Aboriginal leaders they reported the estimated population as being closer to 900 people with approximately 300 to 400 children requiring child care services.

The project in Corner Brook is scheduled to receive an estimated amount of \$5.0 million over the next 5 years to operate their program. The centre has been scheduled to open in mid-July 1994 and it is designed to provide services to Aboriginal and non-aboriginal

children. Of the three ECE¹⁴ teachers proposed to deliver these services one is to be an Aboriginal person. The centre is to apply for an operating license from the provincial government.

The 3-storey building where the centre is to operate previously housed another day care centre which closed 2 years ago. The centre will provide services to approximately 100 children and their parents will be required to stay with the children while at the centre. Tertiary services to be developed include a toy lending library which is designed to build respect and care in children. As well, youth programming, focussed on alcohol and drug awareness/prevention will be developed and provide a place for the children to go after school.

The target group for this program is high risk, low income families and their children. With a reported high unemployment rate throughout the entire region the magnitude of the need for this service was described as extremely necessary. This region is also experiencing a high rate of single and teen mothers as reported by interviewees, indicating that support services such as parenting skills and respite care may be seriously required.

In Nain, Labrador, an Inuit day care centre has been in operation since 1982. The centre offers Inuit cultural programming to 18 children and it is licensed by the province. There are two ECE workers who received their training from Memorial University in St. John's.

Along with Inuk, the centre also instructs in English, the language predominantly used at home. The children are fed traditional foods in the diet since this food is found in abundance throughout the

¹⁴ ECE refers to Early Childhood Education instructors who meet the provincial requirements identified in section i, of this chapter.

area. Non-traditional foods are expensive to purchase in local stores thereby making them unaffordable within the centre's operating budget. The community based population of children aged 2-6 years of age is estimated as being 30-40 people. According to the centre's director, it is evident to the school teachers which children have been enrolled in the program. They report that child care centre children have better attention spans, better performance in class work, and better socialization skills. The centre used to have a special education teacher, however, funding for this position terminated two years ago. According to centre staff there is a large incidence of learning disabilities in the community, as such the need for special education instruction is significant.

These are the only examples of Aboriginal child care development in the province. The remaining Aboriginal population, when they require child care programming, must access existing mainstream child care spaces, if the vacancy exists and if they can afford the costs of this service.

In St. Johns', Newfoundland's largest and capital city, the Friendship Centre estimates that nearly 750 Aboriginal people live there within which about 200 are children 0-14 years old. There is no Aboriginal child care program in this city, nor do existing centres do not offer any Micmac or Inuit culture in their programming. According to the Friendship Centre, Aboriginal people would access culturally appropriate services if they were available. Otherwise, Aboriginal people requiring child care must make private arrangements that do not offer developmental services to children or cultural awareness.

There is a high rate of single Aboriginal mothers living in poverty. As such the majority of children live in high risk situations and they will more than likely repeat the cycle of dependence. The Friendship Centre acts as a referral service

helping Aboriginal people who come to the city for a variety of services. Further, the centre offers workshops on AIDS and alcohol and drug abuse. Regarding parenting workshops Aboriginal people must access existing programs.

When discussing the proposed federal headstart initiative, off reserve Aboriginal people expressed caution regarding its implementation. Further, they expressed dismay at not knowing very much about the program. However, they did express that such a program could mark the beginning of establishing Aboriginal oriented child care type programming. Also, they were sceptical because there have been similar programming announcements in the past and this area has not benefitted from the funds or the entire initiative has been scrapped before any funding had been allocated.

2. On Reserve

There is one reserve in the province, the Conne River Band with a reported population of 470 people, of which children aged 0-14 years comprise 25.6%, or 120 people. The employment rate on the reserve is 97% according to community references. All child care is through informal arrangements made between adults. In the past, community discussions regarding child care have concluded that existing arrangement meet their needs. As a result there is no child care centre in this community nor plans to develop one.

The community does offer a pre-school program delivered to three year old children, the year before they enter kindergarten. The community is quite content with existing child care services and they see no change occurring in the near future.

The community is 40 miles from the nearest town, and therefore it has established many community services towards establish self-sufficiency. As a result of this the community enjoys full employment. The transfer of health services from Health Canada's,

Medical Services Branch to the Band government has created many employment positions. Other Band administered and community oriented programs such as silviculture and environmental services add to establishing long term gainful employment for community members.

iv. Summary Analysis of Non-aboriginal Interviews

No interviews completed, officials were unavailable for interviews.

v. Summary Analysis of Literature Review

One research report was found.

- Native Child Care Research Project: Final Report, Benoit's Cove, Nfld., 1989. (Federation of Newfoundland Indians)

The report provides an overview of existing child care programs on the island part of the province. It identifies the total number of centres as being 109, and the total number of spaces as being 2,859. It describes the centres according to regional divisions. The report concludes that a low population density, decreasing populations, an aging population, lack of economic resources and a lack of provincial support undermine the Federation's concerns regarding children.

vi. Summary Analysis of Newfoundland/Labrador

The development of Aboriginal child care programs and services has been next to none in this province. The Nain day care provides services to 18 children from this community. The new program being developed in Corner Brook will service both Aboriginal and non-aboriginal children. Parts of the program will be culturally appropriate and parents are required to participate in the program.

The need however is far greater than what these programs can meet. No Aboriginal services exist in the two largest centres but the population density in these locations support the necessity for such programs. Provincial government support is very low for even mainstream society, therefore little hope exists for assistance from this governing body.

vii. Recommendations and Conclusions

The situation in Newfoundland/Labrador has some positive elements with the new program in Corner Brook, and the long term existence of the centre in Nain. Much more need is evident but exactly how these needs are to be met remains unanswered. The Aboriginal population in Newfoundland/Labrador is confronted with serious problems, high unemployment rates and few job prospects do not provide an infrastructure of support for child care programming. However, Native children require some type of help if their future is to be better than that of their parents.

Recommendation 1.

The federal headstart strategy be implemented and that allocations for high needs areas such as Newfoundland/Labrador be placed as a high priority.

Recommendation 2.

The federal government uphold its fiduciary responsibility for the rest of the Indian population in Newfoundland.

Atlantic Regional Overview - Conclusions

Child care as a political issue has not received a great deal of recognition by Aboriginal or non-aboriginal politicians. This has occurred for basically two reasons; 1) because it is commonly perceived as being a women's issue and most politicians are men; and 2) despite Aboriginal political rhetoric proclaiming that our children are our future, Aboriginal men have not embraced their parental responsibilities leaving the majority of these to women.

Within Aboriginal societies fundamental changes need to occur whereby children will benefit from the influence and commitment of two parents acting as positive role models. The distancing of Aboriginal men from their parental roles has caused a great deal of social decay in Aboriginal communities reflected primarily in youth dissatisfaction. Cyclical realities such as dependency, suicide, sexual deviance, and alcohol, drug and substance abuse, rampant in many communities, require that all members of a community act in responsible ways to eliminate their continuance.

As with any other perceptions there are exceptions; it must be noted that some men have duly accepted their parental responsibilities but they however, remain a small minority. The facts that single parent, mother led, families continue to increase in numbers, coupled with the ever increasing number of teen age mothers supports the conclusion that Aboriginal men are continuing to abdicate their parental roles and responsibilities.

Clearly, the majority of significant child care programming advancements and initiatives, described throughout this paper, have been initiated by women, with positive results having been realized because of their commitment and dedication to reaching solutions. The goal of the Micmac/Maliseet Child Care Council (in New Brunswick), consisting 100% of women, is to influence Aboriginal community leaders, predominantly men, to make children the number

one priority. The simplicity of having to make this a goal within their own cultural milieu, further supports the lack of recognition men afford their children and the long term needs of their children.

The lack of adequate and culturally appropriate child care programs for Aboriginal children requires that the issue be seen in its community context first; then as relating to other levels afterwards. In traditional Aboriginal societies the care, including education, of children was firstly the responsibility of all members of the community. This is the perspective to which Aboriginal people must return. In Atlantic Canada this is much easier said than done primarily because 500 years of contact has resulted in cultural destruction and absorption of dominant societal values. Most Aboriginal people in this part of the country do not and cannot speak their mother tongue and, strangely enough, the revival of traditional values is being met with strong indifference and ridicule by community members.

The indifference towards re-instituting traditional values basically comes from the fact that; what is being required of Aboriginal people living in this region is that they must change once again, this time from Euro-Canadian values to their own traditional values. As with any nation of people, change is not readily accepted because it requires changes in fundamental beliefs. Many elders are especially reluctant to embrace traditional spirituality because they find extreme comfort in the religions in which they presently believe and have known all of their lives. To have to pick and choose, especially regarding beliefs, is something that they refuse to do. There is however an interesting dichotomy when the focus is turned to language.

Here, there is almost total support for the revival of Aboriginal languages as a means of instilling pride and self-esteem in children. Language may then be seen as being either not as crucial

to the inner being as religion is or it may be that language is the first and most critical step in the realization of cultural revival. Which ever perspective is embraced the bottom line is that the community is the focus and the decision to change rests there.

As with these issues, child care is also firstly a community matter. However, reserves and other locations where Aboriginal people live are far from being the traditional communities they used to be. Therefore, one can only pursue the traditional perspective so far, then existing realities need to be integrated.

Present day Aboriginal communities, in Atlantic Canada, are of two natures, the first being a predominantly homogenous Aboriginal majority population, located within a small geographic area and the second is characterised by the Aboriginal population being a tiny minority in a rural/urban location operating primarily under Euro-Canadian values and norms. There are many differences and similarities between these places.

In the first situation the community has a local government operating under the sanction of the population. The Band government does exercise control regarding community programs and support services. The complicating feature however is the existence of federal government authority governing the operations of the band government within the terms of the Indian Act. The limitations of decision making and autonomous control hinder the operations of the local authority especially in comparison to pre-European, traditional times.

The population may work for the local government or they may be employed off the reserve. Interaction occurs on a continual basis by people leaving the reserve to shop for goods, for education, for social/recreational functions or other reasons. The point is that the reserve community is not isolated and that mutual benefit and dependence exists for those Aboriginal people living on the reserve

as for those non-aboriginal people living nearby. External influences also impact on the reserve community, with such influences coming from interactions or from electronic sources, primarily television and radio/music.

These influences can impact on the total population of the reserve resulting in continual reassessment of existing values. (The preceding discussion is an over-simplification of the full complexity of the reserve, however, the purpose of this paper is to focus on child care.)

In the second scenario the Aboriginal community exists within a larger society. Here the population is usually scattered throughout the larger geographic area, being either the province or urban limits. There is no Aboriginal governing authority although the people are politically represented by various associations. In many cases Aboriginal people are required to access existing services which are not within their control nor based on their cultures. Further, they have very little influence on the non-aboriginal governments, municipal, provincial or federal.

Their communities have virtually no resemblance to traditional communities and they have usually only the Friendship Centre to seek as an enclave for native culture. It is rather ironic that these people are outsiders in these communities when the land upon which all of this exists is historically theirs, not that of non-aboriginal people. The irony is sad because it is certainly not a pleasant reality.

The relationship of all of this to child care is that child care exists within the totality of each community. The need for child care, especially in an Aboriginal context, becomes a critical reality if Aboriginal people are to survive and to become vital contributors to society. The development of the child, the first goal of Aboriginal child care, needs to occur as Aboriginal people

determine to be appropriate. The necessity of preparing the child to be healthy, in accordance with Medicine Wheel teachings, will ensure a well balanced individual capable of achieving success as a parent, partner, community member and as a contributor to society at large.

Aboriginal child care needs to be affirmed at the community level with the role of government as facilitator and supporter. There is a large need for quality and culturally appropriate child care throughout Atlantic Canada. Many developments are being made within the Aboriginal community but, the support and facilitation from government is lacking.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1.

That First Nation governments and other Aboriginal political organizations make true commitment to their children by developing a plan of action which would result with implementation of culturally appropriate child care programming.

Recommendation 2.

That Aboriginal social service providers, especially child care advocates continue to press Aboriginal and non-aboriginal politicians for the recognition of childrens' needs as their first priority.

Recommendation 3.

That the Federal government recognize and respect its fiduciary responsibility for all Aboriginal; and that it abide by the conditions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (especially in respect of Articles: 8.2.; 27.1.,3.; 29.(a),

(c); 30.; 31.1.,2.;), by ensuring that Aboriginal communities are equipped with the proper resources whereby Aboriginal children can be taught their culture, language and heritage. (The definition of "proper resources" must be defined by Aboriginal people in their communities)

Recommendation 4.

That Provincial governments accept their responsibilities for Aboriginal children, especially of Aboriginal parents who pay provincial taxes, by ensuring that Aboriginal communities and parents have the proper resources to provide culturally appropriate child care programming for their children (The definitions for "culturally appropriate" and "proper resources" must be defined by Aboriginal people in their communities)

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