

CIRCLE OF CONCERN  
BY  
FREDERICTON NATIVE  
FRIENDSHIP CENTRE  
  
PRESENTED TO:  
ROYAL COMMISSION OF  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

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I don't speak  
with my native  
tongue, I don't  
practice old  
traditions, I know  
not of my culture...

... But yet, I Am  
A native.

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## INTRODUCTION:

My name is Rhonda Alain and I was hired by the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre (FNFC) to be the Project Coordinator, along with Terri Paul as Assistant Coordinator to conduct this research project. Our first month was spent familiarizing ourselves with the information through the literature that had been produced by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), as well as, meeting with the Board of Directors to see what expectations they had for us and this research project. The purpose of this research project is to identify the concerns and issues which impact our lives as Aboriginal People.

We were told we would be conducting a needs assessment for Urban Aboriginal Youth, and the dissemination of relevant information. We will seek to address the need for more effective communication with aboriginal youth on a provincial and regional level. The FNFC is concerned that many of the needs experienced by Aboriginal Youth are perpetuated through systematic discrimination, through assimilation policy and programming, which promotes inherent inequalities in relation to the social, spiritual and cultural lives of our Aboriginal youth. We see ourselves as stakeholder in the process which is taking place around us, including the Royal Commission Hearings. The decisions which are made will impact on Urban Aboriginal youth in terms of the quality of life in and outside aboriginal communities, and through educational needs and services. We will identify the ways in which the FNFC can work at regional and local levels to care for our youth and try and meet their needs as effectively as possible.

Through the continuous effort of the FNFC, we anticipate the development of programs that will enable our youth to be encouraged to help rebuild the spiritual fabrics of their communities.

**SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION:**

Throughout the research and the information we shared at the youth talking circles, we will present the concerns and recommendations that the youth have expressed to us over these past months. We relied on many different forums to conduct this research project, for example we attended community activities, educational workshops, RCAP Hearings, and conducting youth talking circles, with questionnaires, etc. Included throughout this research paper we refer to the event that we have documented as an Appendix, these are attached after the main body of work, along with the questionnaires' and findings.

There have been many concerns voiced by the youth, the main area's of concern and the solutions they have recommended are as follows:

**Education:**

Education is seen as key to solving the problems faced by many aboriginal youth. These concerns result from course content, to school, personal and social environments.

**Recommendations:**

- Revision of Schools Curriculums that recognize and reflect the aboriginal perspective.
- More aboriginal teachers are needed especially in schools that have a large aboriginal population.
- Community Resource Libraries are needed to assist in cultural awareness initiatives.
- Culturally Based Curriculums developed for educating parents and youth.
- Developing our own curriculum standards for Education that are parallel with Provincial curriculum standards.

-Aboriginal Language programs in aboriginal communities, and urban native centre's, ie Friendship Centres, Aboriginal Tribal Councils, Native Women's Associations.

-Stop the pull out programs that are provided for culture and history for Aboriginal people which continue to promote segregation policies, between the native students and their non-native peers. These classes should be attended by all students, whatever their culture is. This will foster a better understanding of another's culture.

### **Suicide:**

Suicide attempts are a desperate plea for help and seen as a threat to the well being of many Aboriginal youth. This critical point of self-evaluation, with no apparent solution to their problems aboriginal youth find themselves at risk for self destruction. The many fears expressed by the youth and what they themselves want and need for survival.

### **Recommendations:**

-Prevention workshops to be held in schools and Aboriginal communities.

-A twenty-four hour crisis line in areas of risk

-Healing circles facilitated by Elders along with the support of Community and Child and Family Services.

-Job training programs that will promote their self-esteem.

-Youth initiatives that will provide an opportunity for the youth to establish and strengthen their feelings of self worth.

-Peer Counselling Courses and Services

-Youth Incentive programs established in community and outside community.

### **Aboriginal Spirituality/Culture:**

Many youth are seeking the spiritual and cultural needs they

desire, through community initiatives and social gatherings. Through many educational attempts, programs seem to lose their zest if the communities and families do not get involved. The responsibility for spirituality and culture is with each and every Aboriginal community and person.

Many of our Aboriginal communities face this cultural and spiritual deficit. This along with the deterioration of Aboriginal languages which is seen as the bases for many cultural beliefs and values, needs strengthening. It is disheartening to see our youth hungry for their own identity as Aboriginal people.

**Recommendations:**

- Community cultural activities which encompass the roles and responsibilities of each generation, while preparing for the next generations to come.
- Language Programs and activities, seasonal or otherwise.
- Aboriginal Communities and Urban Native Friendship Centres provide opportunities for sharing the responsibility of spiritual and cultural teachings.

Many of these activities may to some extent be happening in each and every community. The continuity of these activities is the responsibility of all of us. No matter what your culture is if you want to maintain this vital component you have to be taught about it, practice it in everyday life, and begin to understand that it is a way of life that is valuable to us as Aboriginal people. Our roles as Friendship Centres must be able to maintain programs like these to support our Aboriginal communities and people around us.

**Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem:**



Since many of us are influenced by the people around us, this concern for the youth is equally important. How to make the right choices for yourself and others around you. Some of these teachings are very basic personal values and come from the source they originated. If these values are not supported by peers, pressure is applied and the youth often has to choose between friends and family. Which are both vital to the preservation of one's self.

No recommendations were made that would solve these concerns. What is needed is open communication lines to parents and youth, activities which promote social involvement together. Much of the emphasis is placed on the youth to maintain the life skills they have been taught, but also on parents to model these teachings and not just talk about them.

#### **Traditional Teachings:**

This is felt by all that the traditional teachings are the responsibility of all Aboriginal people. This cannot be taught at school and then not nurtured at home or vice a versa. The concern that traditional teachings be brought into the school agenda leave many Elders and parents feeling troubled. The Elders and parents see this as a way of life, not something that is taught for forty-five minutes a day or once a week. These teachings should be offered at the community level and be maintained by the Aboriginal communities themselves. Youth expressed the need for these kinds of teachings and must seek these opportunities within their communities or other places, such as Friendship Centres, Tribal

Councils, etc.

Through several discussions with aboriginal youth in New Brunswick, many of the concerns and issues brought forward have been presented here. The forum we have used is documented through the activities that we participated in and in the one's we initiated.

**CIRCLE OF CONCERN:**

"We will complete the circle, we will dry our tears,  
Because we are survivors, the identity of Canada"  
Rita Joe<sup>1</sup>

**Taxation:**

We began the project shortly after the imposition of the Provincial Sales Tax (PST), which had been arbitrarily imposed on the Aboriginal Peoples in this area. Roadblocks had been set up in most Aboriginal Communities in protest of this tax. PST which is primarily used for Social Services and Education Act, which is and has been the responsibility of the Federal government.

The Federal government has a responsibility to finance Education programs from benefits derived from lands and resources once exclusively occupied by Aboriginal people. This is an Aboriginal treaty right which is protected in the Constitution Act of 1982, sections 25 and 35.<sup>2</sup> As for Social Service benefits each First Nation community maintains this responsibility within their community, which are not provided through Provincial dollars.

During the protest, many of the Aboriginal communities which had set up the roadblocks felt betrayed by both the Federal and Provincial governments, along with their own elected band officials. Some of the communities suffered assaults by outside

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<sup>1</sup> Rita Joe, Inu and Indians We're Called, Ragweed Press, 2nd Printing 1992

<sup>2</sup> Preparing for First Nation Self Government, Poster produced by the Assembly of First Nations and the National Indian Brotherhood

communities and authorities. For example, on the Kingsclear Reserve an army of police officers, along with riot police, took action to remove the roadblock that had been set up on the Trans Canada Highway that runs through the territory of the Maliseet people. On one end the blockade consisted of two wooden saw horses along with a few saplings, and on the other end was a flat bed truck.

The people participating in the peaceful taxation protest were young children, young adults, their parents along with a young boys drum group. No weapons were carried by any of the participants. Once the police and riot squad arrived, a discussion between Chief Sacobie and several of the participants began with the officers. Shortly after, the people and police began rushing towards the blockade. The police were throwing people to the ground and putting handcuffs on them. It did not matter if you were a women or a child or physically disabled, you were to be removed. After arresting twenty-eight people in that community, the RCMP released approximately twenty-one canisters of tear gas into that Aboriginal Community. Chief Sacobie was the first to be arrested and then released, along with six others. They were release that evening, for whatever reasons.

A major concern is for the youth that were there, the social impact this experience has had on them. They seen their mothers, fathers, and others in their community being assaulted by the RCMP officers and dragged off to an awaiting police van. The scars that many of these youth suffered will go unnoticed until a later, maybe

to a time when they themselves have encounters with the law. At a time when social issues are a concern none were addressed here, not to these youth.

Red Bank, another Aboriginal community located in Newcastle, also had a roadblock. A bridge connecting that Aboriginal community to the non-native community of Sunny Corner was blockaded. This too was a peaceful protest, on the part of the Native people, no weapons were involved. On the other end of the bridge, in the non-native community, Sunny Corner, approximately two to three hundred non-natives gathered carrying chains, tire irons and bats. The residents of Sunny Corner were prepared forcefully to take down the barricade and anyone participating in it. But no tear gas was used to disperse this crowd of angry people; four arrests were made.

As for those arrested in the Kingsclear Blockade incident, they were divided into four separate groups. The first group, which consisted of four native men and two non-native men, went to trial on May 6, 1993. The first days were lengthy due to all the arresting officers that testified, along with other RCMP officials. On August 25, 1993, judgement was passed down by Judge Harper that found all four native men guilty of an "act of unity", with an absolute discharge. Also in this group were two non-native participants who were found not guilty and given the "benefit of doubt".

This horrific event scarred the sense of equality for many Aboriginal people and the racist remarks and feelings were felt by

all, native and non-native alike. Not a day went by that the newspaper didn't have a slanderous headline or article about Aboriginal people.

Due to the events recently experienced, the faith in this Royal Commission had diminished. It was felt that any government that would financially support this Commission would in the end, have the final decision as to what would be done with it. Therefore our efforts would once again be reduced to words that mean nothing to these government people.

With our strong cultural beliefs as native people and for our ancestors before us and our children to follow, we will try to produce a report which will accurately reflect the young Aboriginal people we have made contact with and finally to present any solutions which may have surfaced throughout these discussions.

#### **RCAP HEARINGS:**

##### **Moncton:**

The first Round Table Hearing that we participated in was held in Moncton, with Commissioners Ren'e Dussault and Viola Robinson. We were still in the initial stages of our project here at the FNFC, however it was decided we should attend the hearing. Throughout the discussions and listening to the many participants who spoke what struck me most was the passion and the with which the words were spoken. I wondered what possible actions the Royal Commission could take to help in establishing new relationships under already deplorable conditions?

The thought that stayed with me throughout was that the

Commission could do nothing, it was up to us as Aboriginal People to start taking action; find workable. In order to establish new relationships, we need to begin by better understanding and helping ourselves. Our Aboriginal cultures need the support and respect of the other cultures here in Canada, to make this all happen. Is this possible?

Herman Saulis, one of the participants at the Moncton hearing, spoke for the Native Veterans of the Second World War. He asked the Royal Commission for letters of recommendations, regarding compensation from the following government departments: Veterans Affairs, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and Health and Welfare Canada. What is requested by the Aboriginal Veterans is to be recognized for their years of service to Canada which is comparable to that of non-aboriginal veterans. This oversight has continued since 1945, and has yet to be rectified.<sup>3</sup>

Another participant of the hearing were representatives of the Aboriginal Peoples Council which claims to represent all of their members, status, non-status off-reserve aboriginal people in New Brunswick. Their members they are seeking a "holistic approach to self government", through which healing is first and foremost throughout the self government process. They see of the Indian Act as the main problem; the instrument of their destruction. One of their recommendations is to abolish the Indian Act, which created artificial divisions of aboriginal people which has left many

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Saulis, An Aboriginal Veterans Submission, June 15, 1993, RCAP Hearing Moncton

Aboriginal people and their communities powerless to arbitrary governmental decisions.<sup>4</sup>

Katherine Bransfield, who spoke for N.B Native Indian Women's Council, listed over one hundred issues and concerns reflected through her research on the issue of self government for Aboriginal women here in New Brunswick. She also spoke for Gignoo, the only transition house here in New Brunswick for Aboriginal women and the need for additional training of house staff. These support services would assist in helping abused women to learn the challenging life skills required to become free of abusive living situations.<sup>5</sup>

These are but a few reflections of the presentations made to RCAP. Each participant had their own unique way of presenting their concerns and issues regarding the Aboriginal people they represented.

**Fredericton:**

The RCAP - Youth Circle Hearing on June 16, 1993, at the St. Mary's Community Hall was held here in Fredericton. This circle was attended by many Aboriginal youth from around New Brunswick. The Commissioners were, again, Viola Robinson and Ren'e Dussault. The issues raised ranged from personal experiences to community problems.

Jeffrey Ward, from the Red Bank community, talked about family

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<sup>4</sup> New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, Presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, June 15, 1993, Gary Gould and Frank Palmater presented brief.

<sup>5</sup> Katherine Bransfield, N.B. Native Indian Women's Council Inc., June 15, 1993, RCAP Hearing - Moncton.



breakdown being a major problem in his community. He says what is needed most are support programs. "These support programs would not only benefit the individual but eventually the community." He went on to talk about the problems of substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, all of which only deteriorates one's self esteem. Another problem he identified was Education. One thing he wants to see is the Federal Community School system brought up to the standard of the Provincial Schools. He also addressed the need for cultural education programs which educate the natives and non-natives about Aboriginal peoples; about who they are and their history rather than the usual history that lessons which do not include the history of native people nor recognize the vital part they have had in Canada's history. Along with updated curriculum he felt that much emphasis is placed on the youth in school, but not enough is offered to them that have dropped out, such as incentive programs to keep the youths in school or in getting them back into the school. The final recommendation he made was to have Youth Commissioners looking into the concerns. Pointing out that many youth would not want to talk as readily to an adult as they would to another young person.

Phyllis Barnaby from the Burnt Church Community, expressed concern about Secondary Schooling and its funding cutbacks. She also voiced concern over the high drop out rates among Aboriginal university students. Not being able to get settled in and with no Aboriginal guidance councillor to talk to about their concerns once courses have commenced were but a few examples of difficulties

experienced by Aboriginal students. One student said "When we begin the school year there are lots of native students; before the first term is up almost half have disappeared and by Christmas all but a few are left to take exams and continue into the second term". Barnaby went on to say that lack of confidence and being away from their homes is what causes most students to drop out.

Nebi Nicholas, from the Tobique Community, also expressed concern about Secondary Education. He said, "What is going to happen to us if Self Government becomes a reality?" Already he said that there have been major cutbacks to the students coming from his community. "Where will we be without Education?" Again there are no easy answers and the Commissioners told him so. Other youth from the Tobique community were there to support these statements and to emphasize that education is not seen as a priority to most Band staff.

Tammy Augustine, from the Big Cove Community, expressed the need for night classes for parents along with the youth that have dropped out. These should consist of culture, history, and language classes. Elders are needed in the classroom to assist and to listen to the concerns the youths face today. Schools should be hiring Aboriginal teachers who would automatically serve as effective role models.

Overall, this was an exceptional hearing and many of the youth who participated expressed these concerns in various ways, often referring and returning to the main problems that they see around them in their own communities.

**YOUTH CIRCLES BY FNFC:****Education:**

From the beginning we heard from the youth about the importance of Education and their desire to learn their native tongue, Maliseet. The majority of Mi'kmaq youth we spoke to still have much of their native language base due to both the home and school emphasis on Aboriginal language in the Mi'kmaq communities. In the Maliseet communities many of the grandparents of these youth were disciplined harshly for speaking their native language in the school and, therefore, no language was passed on to a whole generation of Aboriginal people. One Elder said, "I wanted to teach my children English at home so they would not have to be punished like I was punished for speaking Maliseet in school. If they, the children, wanted to learn later on in life I would have taught them." This common thought was expressed over and over again by young and old alike; that life would be easier for the children if they learned to communicate within the dominant language than to have to learn how to communicate once they entered school. (Appendix D)

In one of the public schools here in the Fredericton area, they have had a Maliseet Language Program the past twelve years. When I met with the teacher of this program, Christine Saulis, she said, "that the native children in South Devon have Maliseet language classes for fifteen minutes twice a week." Compare this to the French classes, which these children attend forty-five minutes three times a week, and English is taught the remainder of

the time. These fifteen minute blocks are not adequate to properly teach our native children their Maliseet language. We have a responsibility to these children and the many others, to see that their needs are met. If this connection is not made within the next generation, the Maliseet language will become extinct.

**Racism:**

Another concern the youth have is the racism that is still in the school environment as well as the outside communities. One youth said, "They call me a wagon burner", when I asked her why do they call you that she replied, I don't know, but I tell them "you make'em I'll burn'em." This type of stereotyping still exists for many Aboriginal people. The literature used in the public schools to educate the non-native and native youth reinforces these stereotypical attitudes and does not address native culture nor the different nations in North America. (Appendix C)

Other, similar, remarks were made by Aboriginal youth on the topic of racism but all were due to a lack of accurate historical documented information that is not readily available to schools, therefore leaving a trail of illiterate youth about native issues, values or beliefs. Both native and non-native who do not have the opportunity to learn the rich and valuable history about the native people of North America remain with old stereotypical views. This along with the lack of resources available to education programs has helped in perpetuating the myth of the "Hollywood Indian". One of the biggest complaints from the non-native community is that native people are seen as "living in the lap of luxury", no taxes,

no bills, no mortgages, etc., when in fact many of the youth who participated in this study either live off reserve or in near poverty situations on reserve. Very few had the resources available to afford some of the luxuries that they were assumed to have. Much of the cross cultural training that is needed to eliminate this type of racism is not offered even at the University level let alone the public schools.

#### **Drug and Alcohol Abuse:**

Drug and alcohol abuse also were also discussed in length, noting peer pressure is a main concern for the youth. Some of them see alcohol and drug abuse as a problem for others but not for themselves even though they too are users themselves. One youth in particular said "I drink and smoke up once in awhile but not as much as some of my friends". I asked if this was a way to really accurately measure one's own consumption of drugs and/or alcohol and the youth replied "it was one good way maybe not very accurate." Others spoke of alcohol abuse within their families and how it upset their lives and see the only way to deal with it is to drink themselves or go away for awhile.

#### **Suicide:**

When we talked about suicide and aboriginal youth, many of the youth expressed fear of the idea of "being out of control". Others said suicide was a problem on only some of the reserves not all. Throughout this research the statistic for suicides in New Brunswick native communities are unknown to us.

Recently the Big Cove community has experienced the

devastation of eight suicides of Aboriginal Youth were widely reported in the media.

"The Big cove community has taken a number of measures to deal with this situation, including a healing week during which traditional native values were emphasised and alcohol was banned on the reserve."

Daily Gleaner, Wednesday, July 28, 1993.<sup>6</sup>

The community at Big Cove realizes this is a community problem which must be solved at the community levels. Of the many solutions that have been tried help some but not all. Avenues must be tried in order to try and reach all the youth at risk.

Another issue of concern is the number of suicide attempts, which go unreported. When discussing the issue of suicide Kathleen Woodman, reported that from a recent workshop she attended on suicide the number of attempts is 3 - 4 times higher than those actually reported. Another point she made was that many police are reluctant to classify a case as suicide. Due to delay in reporting statistical findings, anything that we have found is outdated by at least two years. date.

#### **OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN:**

##### **Teen Pregnancy:**

Although teen pregnancy is a concern for some of the youth most of the concern lies in the support system available to these youth. They feel that very few communities offer recreation programs for their young adults and that sexual activity is often the alternative path chosen. Awareness workshops about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are sometimes brought into

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<sup>6</sup> Daily Gleaner, Wednesday, July 28, 1993

communities but many youth feel awkward in attending these workshops because they are not solely for the youth, thus their family members or parents may be in attendance. These issues, along with peer pressure are seen as the main problems relating to teen pregnancy.

**Sexual Abuse:**

Although sexual abuse was discussed many youth were reluctant to share their feelings on this issue at length. The real threat for the youth we talked with was that of physical abuse. Many youth made remarks about adults or peers in their communities that are being physically abused and nothing is being done about it; people know but they just don't do anything about it.

**Networking:**

A few youths mentioned that they would like to see a network system in place to find out what is happening in the different communities. They also expressed a desire to set up a youth board for the Atlantic region. This youth board would attend the youth conferences, band meetings, and workshops. This youth board would consist of at least 2 delegates from each aboriginal community here in New Brunswick. They would have monthly meetings to discuss areas of concern for the Aboriginal youth of the province.

Part of the goal for this youth committee would also be to establish a newsletter. There is a provincial aboriginal youth representative here in New Brunswick who works with the Canada Council, but the youth were not happy with only one representative for all the Aboriginal youth in New Brunswick and feel that there

is a need for them to be involved in their communities and areas concerning youth issues. One person cannot do the job alone.

**Safe Houses for Youth:**

There is a concern that safe houses be established in every community so that when a youth is in potential danger they will know they can go to this house to be safe until a solution can be reached or until it is safe to return to their homes. The youth see this as a way to stay in native communities instead of being placed in communities not familiar to them. What is in place now is Kingsclear Training Centre, Group Homes, and Foster Families. They would like these safe houses within the native communities. One of the youth that we have made contact with is currently at the Kingsclear Training Centre for this reason. She claims that she is treated like she has committed a crime when the only reason she is there is because she is in need of a safe environment in which to live. She has attempted to commit suicide several times and the social workers in her community felt that this would be the safest environment for her.

**Self Government:**

Many youth expressed concern over the issue of self government. When asked if they can see self government working some said that it would work if community people knew what was going on and were allowed to be part of the consultation process. Money is not the only factor involved with self government, it's also how people will interact with one another.

Others stated that self government will not work because there



is not enough land available for another government or its resources, natural or financial. Overall the topic of self government was not a main concern for the youth due to a lack of information. Some fear was expressed because no one is sure what it will mean or how it will work. All they have to base the knowledge they have on self-government on now is the community band officials that are in place now. As stated above, in most cases self-government is not defined enough to be a threat or conquest for native youth.

#### **SELF GOVERNMENT WORKSHOPS:**

During the past few months we have been in contact with the other intervenor workers in this area and were invited to a workshop on self government held by the New Brunswick Indian Women's Council. This workshop took place at Eel Ground Reserve, June 28, 1993. Although there was a small turn out, the people who did come to participate were very responsive to the presenters at the workshop.

Many of the concerns brought out seem to be about power and control. Other issues were Land Claim, Networking, Government Dependency, and Support Programs. The speakers took time to answer questions to the best of their knowledge, but self-government is so open that no real definitions have been made nor any real guidelines for how Self Government will work. Only a few youth were at this workshop and those there were reluctant to ask questions.

Another workshop on self-government was held August 14 and 15

in Fredericton. The Project Coordinator for IPP was asked to come in and do a presentation at this workshop for the youth and whoever else would be interested. We had twenty five participants and sadly,, no youth in attendance. This was, however, no problem. We presented our findings to the delegates and many questions were asked. A few women were concerned with some of the issues raised by the research being conducted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, mainly education issues. The educational concerns they raised included the home and school connection. They felt that as the public schools have PTA Meetings for the parents and teachers these should occur in aboriginal communities which have schools in their communities. No connection is made to make the parents feel welcome to participate in the education of their children. One women from Eel Ground said that she heard that when the children leave the Federal school to go to the Provincial school they are two to three years behind their peers. Another women said that it just depends on you as an individual and your approach. If you go to the school to help or to volunteer, the children and teachers appreciate it. She went on to say that if your child needs additional help it is up to you as a parent to get involved and not wait for a committee such as the PTA to address these issues.

The main base for concern with education is the need to up date the teaching resources and texts for students. The need for teachers to be accountable to parents with children in the school needs to clarified, however, this was seen by some as the responsibility of the parent, not the teachers.

**EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS:**

We attended some of the Education workshop offered by the school districts concerning aboriginal youth. The workshops were created through the "Excellence in Education" budget which passed this spring. The workshops ranged from teaching to guidance for aboriginal youth and They were designed to help prepare and identify the needs of the youth. Most of the participants consisted of Native school workers; either intervention workers or guidance counsellors.

Again it was an excellent opportunity to meet other Aboriginal people involved in the education process. It was somewhat of a disappointment that so few non-native teachers and school staff took the time or made the effort to attend the workshops that were designed to try and bridge the cultural gap in the school environment.

The feeling was that the workshops should be held in the schools that have a large population of Native youth, not only in the University setting. Many of our schools here in New Brunswick need this type of in service to better understand not only the cultural differences but the similarities.

**Youth Camp:**

The Youth Camp was a unique experience offered to Aboriginal youth living on reserve, and was initiated by the School Board. It was a camp which offered traditional teachings from the Elders. The three day camp was held in a not so typical traditional setting, Kingsclear Resort. The teachings ranged from the sacred gifts of

the earth, to legends. We had some excellent resource people who came in to do the Talking Circles for the youth and most of these circles were successful in reaching them. They participated fully and they related to the teachings often sharing stories or information that they have learned over the years. This camp was designed for the youth in the Senior and Junior High level of schooling.

At the end of the camp the youth offered suggestions about what they would like to see if another camp was to be held next summer. Most of the comments were insightful as to the downfalls of this particular camp, but all the participants appreciated the incentive and effort that it took to get a camp like this started. Many other incentives like this are needed to strengthen the cultural base that is much needed in many native communities for youth today. (See appendix D)

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Through much deliberation with the Board of Directors we developed a questionnaire as one of the methods to be used for information gathering. We worked approximately two weeks on developing this questionnaire, that would provide useful information for both the FNFC and for this research project. We distributed 100 questionnaires, of those distributed 50 were completed and returned and the results have been noted

Overall, the questionnaire was useful for some information but the best response we received was through the Youth Circles. One thing worth noting about the questionnaires was that no solutions

were offered by the youth. This was a surprise because throughout our discussions with them many solutions were given, sometimes indirectly. (Appendix G)

The questionnaire was only one tool we used to gather information. They were too time consuming considering the length of this project and for the participants involved. We had started this part so we felt obligated to see it through, but in all reality the information reflected was what had been stated by the youth themselves. Many of the youth were more comfortable with the verbal communication then in filling out this questionnaire. It was with great patience and effort that these were filled out by the participants and that the compiled data was able to be reflected in this research paper with any relevancy to the actual report.

The last part of this questionnaire was to be used for the purpose of services or workshops to be held at the centre for the youth. The workshops or services most requested were:

- Drumming
- Maliseet Language
- Native Art
- Basketmaking
- Learning Chants
- Traditional Dance
- Beadwork
- Learning about Sweet Grass Ceremony and Harvesting
- Learning about Sweats or Fasts
- Quill work

These were the top ten most wanted workshops or services that the youth said they would be willing to participate in if the opportunity was given to them.

**CONCLUSION:**

It has been with much pleasure to work with the FNFC this summer. We have met a number of youth that have left a lasting impression on us. We owe a lot of credit to this research to the many youth that have presented and participated in this project, to them all I say Waliwon. Throughout our work here at the FNFC there were some main issues of concern for the youth, which we have mentioned throughout the report, but to highlight the areas of concern we have given a brief outline of the solutions that were mentioned by the youth.

The main issues of concern in Education are:

- Curriculum, outdated
- Standard of Education in Federal schools
- Lack of information and resources in Provincial schools about native people, culture or history.
- Native Teachers
- Aboriginal Language Classes
- Aboriginal Awareness to School Administrators
- Incentive Programs for drop outs
- Native Courses given same credit value as other courses, ex. Music/Dance - Drumming and Chanting/Native Dance
- Peer Counselling

#### Secondary Education

- Funding Cutbacks
- Self Government
- Scholarships
- Racism
- Cross Cultural Training
- Open Aboriginal Classes

**APPENDIX A****FNFC YOUTH CIRCLE:****Kingsclear Training Centre:**

The youth from the Training Centre were very interested in having us come up to do a Youth Circle with them. The first time we went the youth were very quiet. We did most of the talking and felt that they would need time to get to know us before any talking would take place. On our second time at the training centre the youth were excited to see us and said they were hoping we would be able to come up every week, it gave them something to look forward to. I asked one of the youth to open with a prayer, at first he was shy but once he got started he did a great job.

The youth were open in sharing why they were in the training centre and what happens in there. They gave us a breakdown of how their days are spent. Through out the discussions the one thing that was strongly felt by all was the sense of community. We have been invited back to for a tour of the facilities, Terri and I have discussed that when our project is over we would like to see the FNFC fill this need for these youth that are here.

Many times we heard that the youth felt abandoned by their families in there. They rarely see their families even on visiting day. One young man excuses his family by saying, we don't have a car and they don't have much money to come see me very often, but I call home when ever I get the chance." One of the reasons they really like us coming is because they see very few native people in there and appreciate that we are willing to make time to go and see

them. I just hope that we can pass this opportunity on to others here at the FNFC it gives us a chance to meet new youth from around the Province.

One of the girls at the training centre says that she is only there because she has tried to commit suicide several times and her family doesn't know what to do with her, so it was decided by the family and the social worker that she would be safest here. She then goes on to say that she feels like she is being treated like a criminal because she has to be searched every time she leaves and that she doesn't feel very safe here. One of the girls on her floor was in for murder and she felt scared of her and told one of the guards so, but nothing could be done because so few girls are here that they are all on the same floor.

We have been asked to return with the drum. We have approached a drum keeper about coming to the training centre with us. We invited the youth down to the Wabanoag gathering that was taking place here in the Fredericton area. That evening about 12 youth showed up down at the gathering site, but not much was really happening during the time that they had arrived. Still it was nice to see them. It had been suggested that we extend the invitation to all the youth at the training centre, because it would more likely be taken seriously by the Administration of the Training Centre if all youth were able to attend. So we did this. When we return with the drum it will be an open invitation to all these youth.



**APPENDIX B****FNFC YOUTH CIRCLE:****New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council - Summer Camp:**

Terri made contact with the youth workers over at the Council to do a Youth Circle during the week of their summer camp. This camp was for all aboriginal youth living off reserve. On July 23, 1993, Terri went to Tracy where the summer camp was being held.

Terri began the circle with the lighting of sweet grass. She then introduced herself and passed the sweet grass around so that the others would do the same. She talked about the research we are doing here at the centre and asked the youth if they could help her in finding out some information. This information would be about themselves and their native culture.

Terri found that none of the youth knew very much about their aboriginal ancestry. Not many of the youth were aware of any racism in their schools or community, due to the fact that no one knew they were Indian. These youth were not taught about native culture in their homes because many were raised by their non-native parent. Terri could emphasize with this, she too was brought up by her non-native mother, and could relate to the stories that they shared with her. Like her, these children were exposed very little to their native culture at school or home.

The questionnaires were filled out by the youth. Terri explained all the questions for them before she would let them continue.

**APPENDIX C****FNFC YOUTH CIRCLE:****Woodstock Maliseet Community:**

Terri arrived at Woodstock and introduced herself to many of the youth that were there. Many of the youth knew Terri, because her father is from this community. She talked about the Friendship Centre and the research project that we were doing here with the Royal Commission. She passed out the questionnaires before we did the Talking Circle. Many youth did not understand the term "Seven Generation" or "Elder".

Before the circle got started Terri told me that these two terms were unclear to the youth so I would have to clarify the meaning to them. I lit the sweet grass and smudged all the youth including myself and Terri. I began the circle, introductions were made. I too am from this community and many of the youth knew me from other projects that I have worked on, but just to make everyone comfortable we did introductions. I explained the terms of seven generations and elder.

Once this was explained many of the youth realized that they already knew what an Elder meant, as for the term Seven Generations none had heard of this before. The issues raised at this circle were:

- Racism at School
- Peer Pressure
- Culture not taken seriously
- Education
- Native Education, ie, culture and language
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse on the Reserve
- Family Violence brought on by Alcohol Abuse
- Activities that teach about culture

-Politics

Some of the Solutions given were:

- Teach the non-natives about Native people
- Native Schools or Native Classes
- Do not sell Liquor
- Family Violence Workshops
- Language and Culture Classes

These solutions are directed toward the issues they felt were of importance to them.

This youth circle really intrigued me to want to put a challenge to these youth about some of the ideas they expressed. When issues of Politics or money began to control our talk I would try and steer it out by asking what would they do if they were making these kinds of decisions for a lot of people. At one point one of the girls said that she would make a school here on the reserve and all the kids could go there instead of to the town school. When Asked what she would teach she said the regular stuff, ie. math, art, science, stuff like that. So I then said what would be the difference between your school and the one you attend now? She said that only native children would be there and no one would be able to tease her for being Indian. When I asked what kinds of things do they say she said they call me things like "wagon burner" or "savage indian". I was curious about the "wagon burner" name and asked why do they call you wagon burner and she said "I don't know, but I tell them you make'em and I'll burn'em." These youth were very candid with us because they knew us, so we were able to have a lot of fun with them.

**APPENDIX D****SUMMER INSTITUTE - YOUTH CAMP****Cultural Enrichment for Maliseet/Mi'kmaq Students - Kingsclear Resort**

This unique experience was an opportunity to involve the youth in education, about what they are interested in learning about their culture. We had Elders from across the Province come in to do workshops with the youth. There were eighteen youth from around New Brunswick that came from the different native communities to be part of this cultural enrichment program that was being offered.

During these days, the teachings were about Legends, Medicines and Language. All of these were done with the Talking Circle format. Many of the youth were interested in the medicines, along with the sacred gifts from Mother Earth when questions were asked about how to collect these medicines and where to find them they were answered but to really understand you would need a more hands on approach, the actual collecting of these medicines would clarify what they looked like and how to use them would have been clearer. The legends provided a great opportunity for the youth to also share the stories that they too have heard over the years. This offered a chance for the youth to share in their knowledge of the legends. The Language Circle offered many youth the chance to express their desire to learn their aboriginal language. One of the youth expressed his concern to learn his language. He said it in a sincere manner that really touched us all. This kind of sharing really made us realize how strong a desire our youth have to learn their language. We as educators can no longer ignore their needs

for a cultural language base program.

Many youth expressed the desire to have this kind of camp again for a longer time frame with a more hands on approach. The last day the youth were asked what they would like to see in the next camp, these were there suggestions:

- Cultural Activities:
- Crafts
- Basketmaking
- Beadwork
- Making a Drum
- Preparation of Traditional Foods
- Set up a Teepee
- Learn Traditional Indian Dances and chants
- Collecting of Medicines
- Tanning a Hide
- Drama
- Legends
- Language
- Youth Social
- 2 weeks for camp
- Sports or other physical activities, canoe trip
- Agenda Posted
- Another Location
- Give Away Ceremony

These recommendations made by the youth reflect what they want to see happening not only in a camp setting but for activities for communities or schools. Some disappointment was felt by the youth due to the fact that the only activities included Talking Circles, but this was at least an attempt to help us as educators to understand what is wanted and needed by our youth to enhance their own cultural identity.

A "Give Away" was planned for the end of camp and many youth were given gifts of sweet grass, sage, rocks shells, hugs, necklaces, etc. This was very much appreciated by the youth and some felt like they wish they could give something but were not

aware of the Give Away Ceremony. The sharing that took place during this camp was very informational for all who attended.

**APPENDIX E****Wabanoag Gathering:**

Aboriginal people from New Brunswick, Quebec, and Maine came for the teachings that would be taking place at this spiritual gathering; many of them bringing teachings to be shared by all. The sacred burial ground of the Maliseet people was the site for this gathering, which is located between the old government building and the new high rise Sheraton Inn. The message was clear, during the gathering people complained to the local authority for the inconvenience that we represented to them, the police were there on a daily basis with complaints from the outside community. This all started when ropes were put up to mark the area off for camping and for the set up of the gathering.

Although a press release was written the public was still unaware of what was happening, it was thought to be some sort of protest again by the native people. We placed signs up around the area to let people know what was happening. During the past year Fredericton launched its River Front Project, this included a gravel walking path from the Sheraton to the downtown area. This walking path was the direct cause of complaint. The path goes through the area that is and has been known to the Maliseet people as their sacred burial ground. When the path was made no contact to the native community was made to see if this was to be a problem to them, seeing that it goes through their ancestral burial ground. Many taunts, hoops and racist remarks came from the community that uses this path, as if once again we had no right to be there and

what is it we hope to accomplish by claiming this area as our sacred burial ground. Either because of this or despite this there was a power that could be felt at the gathering with the uniting of all the people that came and the different communities that were represented. Many of the people that came were there to learn and share their knowledge of the traditional teachings, histories and the collecting of herbal medicines and their uses.

The Eagle Claw Chant group was present and they helped in the drumming and chanting. This was refreshing to see young people wanting to learn the traditional teachings and the history of chants. These young boys also helped in maintaining the sacred fire and in any youth activities that were taking place during this three day learning event. It was with great pleasure and honour to be part of this spiritual gathering.



## APPENDIX F

## FNFC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age:  
11 - 15 \_\_\_\_\_  
16 - 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
21 - 25 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you of Aboriginal Ancestry ? NO \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you: male \_\_\_\_\_ female \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you presently live on reserve ? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
A. If yes how long ? \_\_\_\_\_ months  
\_\_\_\_\_ years  
\_\_\_\_\_ all my life  
B. If no, have you ever lived on reserve ? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you have ever lived on reserve what was the best thing you liked about it ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you feel that where you live has to do with who you are ?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
If so how ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you feel you are part of your community ?  
If so, how ? If not, why ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is it important for you to learn Aboriginal language ?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
A. If yes, where should this learning take place ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you have any opportunity to learn Aboriginal language ?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

10. Is it important for you to learn about Aboriginal Culture ?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

a. If yes, where should this learning take place ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What have you learned about Aboriginal History in school ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Is it important for you to learn about Aboriginal History ?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

a. If yes, where should this learning take place ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Who should be responsible for these kinds of teachings ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you speak your language ? NONE \_\_\_\_\_ SOME \_\_\_\_\_ FLUENTLY \_\_\_\_\_

a. If yes which one do you speak ? Mi'kmaq \_\_\_\_\_  
Maliseet \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

15. The term "Seven Generations", what does this mean to you ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. What is an Elder ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Why do you think they are called Elders ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Have you ever had an opportunity to be around Elders ?

YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

a. If yes, what was the one thing you remember most about those experiences ?

---

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---

---

19. Do you think suicide is a major concern for native youth today ?

YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

a. As a native youth how does this make you feel ?

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---

---

20. Do you have any solutions for any of the concerns mentioned ?

---

---

---

---

21. If you had a chance to participate at a Royal Commission Hearing for Youth, what would you say ?

---

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---

---

Column A - Do you have any knowledge on the topics below?
1 - yes                      2 - some                      3 - none

Column B - Check which workshops you would be interested in?
--

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMSAB

Fishing/Hunting Rights  
Land Claims  
Self-Government  
Taxation  
Treaties

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Drumming  
Chanting  
Dancing  
Cooking

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE

Mi'kmaq  
Maliseet  
Other (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SPIRITUALITY

Sweats - Fasting  
Sweetgrass Ceremonies  
Talking Circles  
Herbal Medicines

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ABORIGINAL ART

Native art displays  
Basket Making  
Beadwork  
Quill work

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\* THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE\*\*\*

## APPENDIX G

## FNFC QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

-73% Surveyed were Female, the largest percentage being in the 11-15 age category.

-All the Participants were of Aboriginal Ancestry.

-63% Lived on Reserve.

-The Fluency of either Aboriginal Language was 6%.

-Solutions offered in the Questionnaire I will reflect them just the way they have written them:

-Natives should have the opportunity to speak their language and learn their culture. They shouldn't be denied the right to learn more about their people.

-If they could talk to someone maybe it would help. Talk to someone with similar problems.

-Youth should have the chance to get involved. Personally I have tried to get involved ie. language, culture, dancing etc. and people just seem to forget about me. eg. It's me, then it is also others.

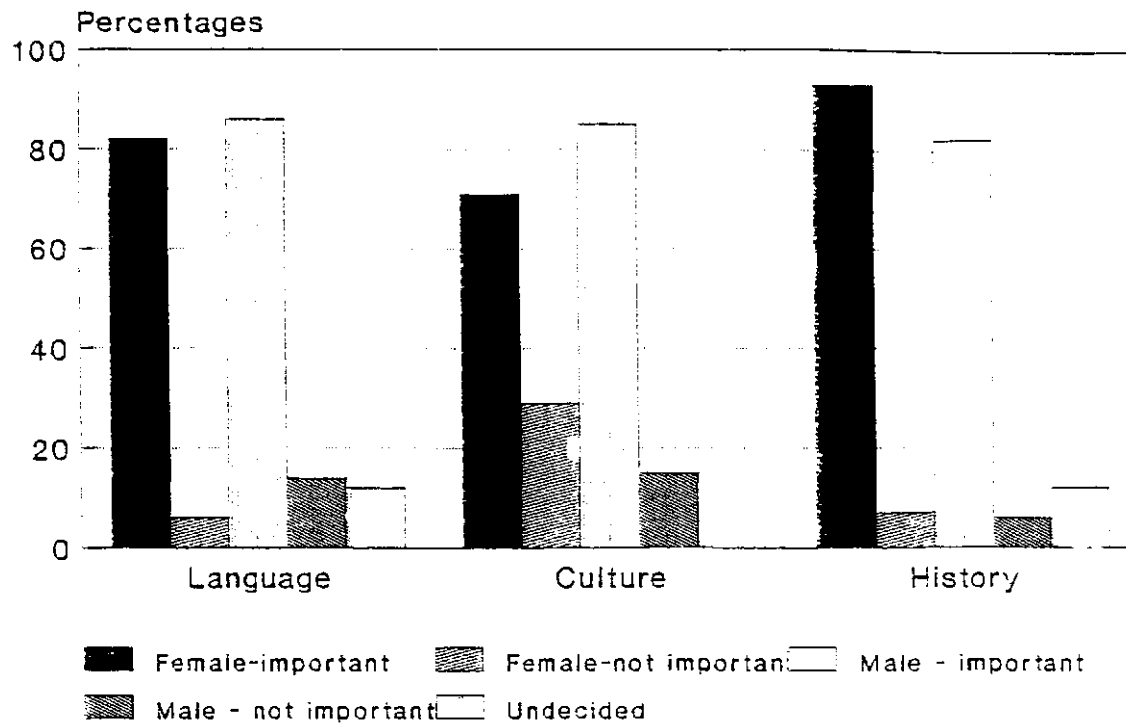
-Information Meetings

-Learn about the causes.

-Help with Problems(family, drugs, alcohol and talk to them)

-Attached are two Graphs, each one has a brief information part.

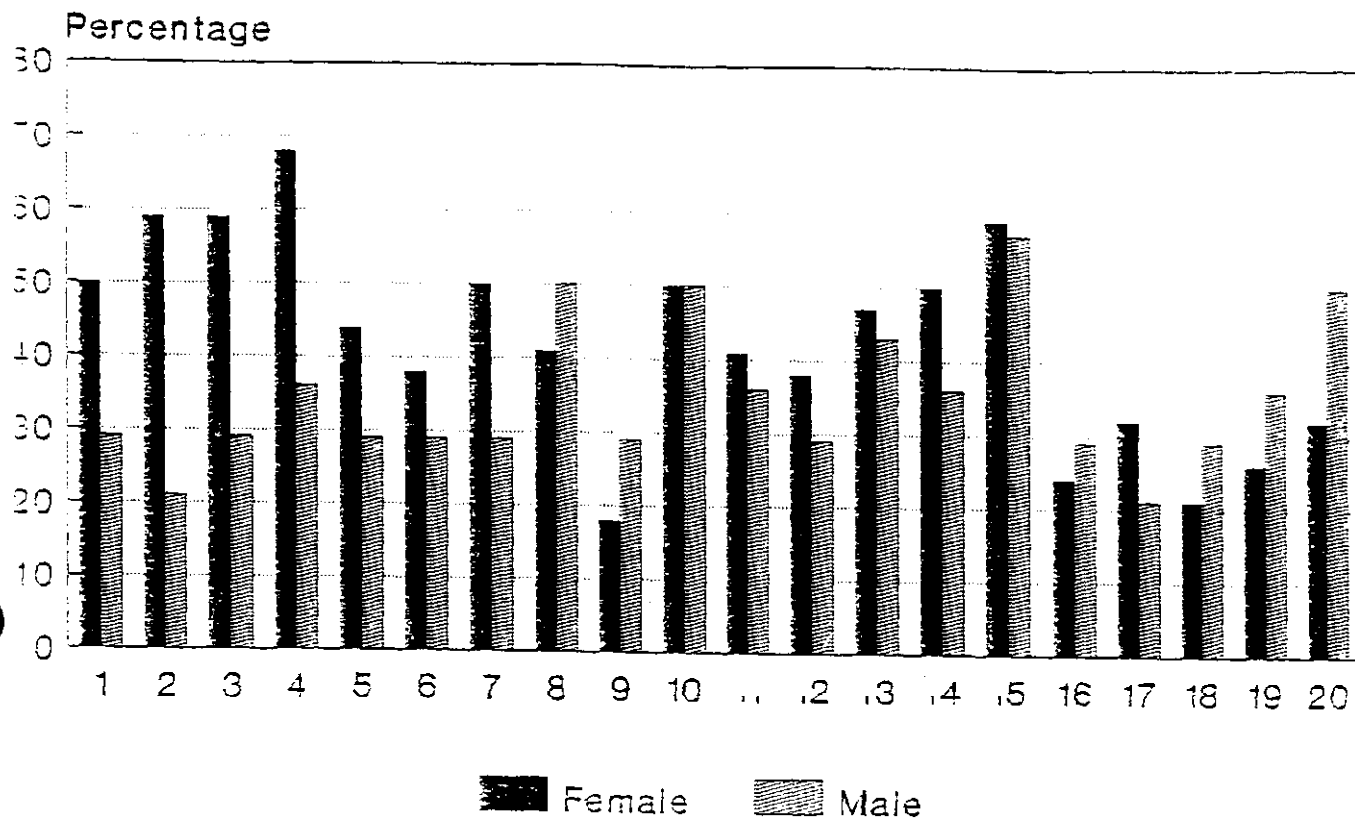
# Language, Culture, History



(Fig. 1)

This graph represents the importance of Language, Culture and History. This reflection is based on the questionnaires which were done here at the centre. These percentages are Questions 10, 12, and 14.

# Interested FNFC Members to Participate in each Workshop



WORKSHOP NUMBER	WORKSHOP NAME
1	QUILL WORK
2	BEAD WORK
3	BASKET MAKING
4	NATIVE ART
5	HERBAL MEDICINES
6	TALKING CIRCLES
7	SWEETGRASS CEREMONIES
8	SWEATS/FASTS
9	OTHER
10	MALISEET
11	MICMAC
12	COOKING
13	DANCING
14	CHANTING
15	DRUMMING
16	TREATIES
17	TAXATION
18	SELF-GOVERNMENT
19	LAND CLAIMS
20	FISHING/HUNTING RIGHTS

(Fig. 2)  
These are the workshops that  
were preferred by the youth, if  
they were available here at the  
FNFC.

Report on:

Labrador Friendship Centre

Happy Valley-Goose Bay

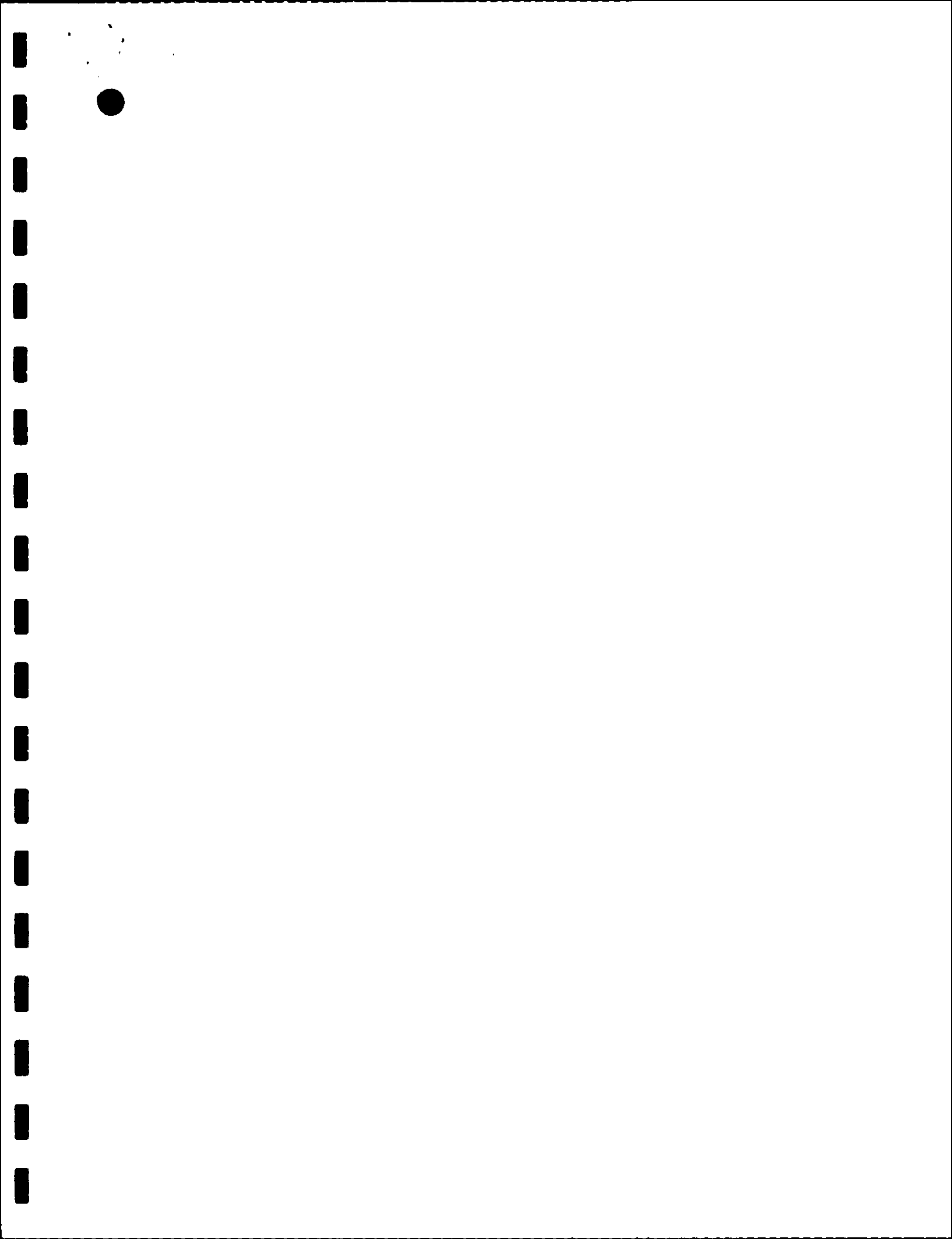
by

Susan Abbass

Presented to: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

September 1993





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## Acknowledgements

This report on the Labrador Friendship Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay was enabled by the National Association of Friendship Centres, who provided the funding for this project. The extensive co-operation of the Friendship Centre staff, members of the common grounds organizations, and non-Aboriginal organizations greatly facilitated the research for this report and is much appreciated. Input from these sources was essential because the data used was submitted by them.

## Introduction

This report is an accumulation of information about the Labrador Friendship Centre, Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Data has been collected concerning the many programs and services that the Friendship Centre offers, the functions and duties of the permanent staff, as well as feedback from the clientele with regards to the services received. Also included are the comments and suggestions of the various organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, that interact with the Labrador Friendship Centre on a regular basis.

There are three main objectives that we have attempted to realise in the writing of this report: 1) to define how the Labrador Friendship Centre is addressing the concerns of the aboriginal community now, 2) how we fit in with relation to other organizations, 3) to determine which areas we should concentrate on for future program development. The Labrador Friendship Centre interacts with many other organizations in implementing and designing some of their programs. It is important that a segment is included on the input of these organizations since they are a part of the daily function of the Friendship Centre.

Although the Labrador Friendship Centre has programs that address several Aboriginal issues, we have felt a need to narrow our focus somewhat to the three major issues: the Justice system, the Health system, and the Education system. We feel that these are the most pressing matters facing us at this point in time and they deserve the most attention. Other important issues will be covered in this report though not as extensively.

## Research Format

The investigation of the Labrador Friendship Centre itself was accomplished through surveying and discussion with the staff, the study of various past and present reports in correlation with the Labrador Friendship Centre, and through the regular observation of the daily events in the building. Feedback was obtained from the clientele through several individual interviews and anonymous surveys.

To determine where the Labrador Friendship Centre stands with regards to the other aboriginal services in the area a survey was conducted. Each organization that offered services to aboriginal people and dealt with the Labrador Friendship Centre on a regular basis was given a survey. These were followed up with interviews with the directors of these organizations. Pamphlets and reports on their purpose and aboriginal involvement were obtained wherever possible.

## Labrador Friendship Centre

### History:

The concept of a Labrador Friendship Centre originated in 1973. Many aboriginal people were experiencing difficulties adjusting from their rural communities to the drastically different urban environment of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. There were problems with a new language, lack of housing, lack of transport, unemployment, alcohol abuse, and the law. At the time there were two organizations interested in addressing those concerns, the Company of Young Canadians and the Happy Valley Inuit Association. After discussion of the issues, it was decided that there was a need for an organization to assist aboriginal people in dealing with these problems.

Information provided by the Company of Young Canadians revealed that there existed across Canada organizations called 'Native Friendship Centres'. These centres had been created to provide assistance to aboriginal people who moved from their homes to an urban area. Funding was provided by the Department of Secretary of State, Native Citizens Directorate through a program called "The Migrating People Programme". An ad hoc committee was formed and they met with the Secretary of State representatives and aboriginal groups in Labrador to determine the procedure for establishing an Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The outcome of the meetings was positive. The first Labrador Friendship Centre was structured and the first core funding was received in October 1974. The first Annual General Assembly was held in 1975 and Mr. Robert Lyall was its first elected president.

Much progress has been made since the beginning of the centre. At first, the most basic of assistance was offered. Great improvements have been made with time. The main objective was that the concerns of aboriginal people be addressed and their needs be met. Adjustments and developments have been made with this objective in mind. Recently, as of June 1992, the Labrador Friendship Centre made the transition from a smaller, worn structure, to a new, spacious, more modern facility. This change has made a substantial difference in the quantity and the quality of services that the Friendship Centre has been able to offer. The Centre was started with two core staff, there are now seventeen full time members.

### Objectives:

The main objective of the Labrador Friendship Centre is to help aboriginal people migrating to the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area adapt to an urban environment. In order to achieve this purpose, the Friendship Centre has set goals for itself with regards to the

many issues that must be addressed as a part of this problem. The Centre endeavours to assist aboriginal people in these areas:

- employment
- housing
- counselling services
- communication and understanding with community service agencies
- making contacts in personal, social, and cultural areas
- establishing and maintaining an accommodation service (hostel)
- education
- serving as a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas
- judicial concerns
- promotion of culture
- health
- youth services

Needs are addressed as they present themselves with the original mandate of aboriginal assistance in mind. However, the Labrador Friendship Centre is open to help all the citizens of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, no one is turned away if the Centre can be of assistance in their time of need. In this way we may benefit the community as a whole.

#### General Information:

The Labrador Friendship Centre has a permanent staff of 17. There are five core positions, three outreach positions, a driver for the Senior's Van, and eight positions associated with the hostel and kitchen. Two temporary full-time youth counsellors are funded by Youth Strategy. There are usually three to five temporary staff funded by the Employment Opportunities Program (Dept. Of Social Services) and they are responsible for hostel security or janitorial services. Throughout the year other short term staff are hired, ie: student Challenge program, instructors training program. At any given time the average number of staff is 25 and there are occasions when the staff numbers exceed 30.

The Labrador Friendship Centre houses a 26 bed hostel with 24 hour security for 365 days a year. A full kitchen staff is on line every day to provide three meals to the hostel occupants and outer patrons. The hostel has become an indispensable commodity for other organizations in the areas of health and justice. Aboriginal people often use the hostel as a place to stay when visiting Goose Bay for medical care. Newly released inmates from the Labrador Correctional Centre often use the facility to adjust to a community setting before returning to their homes. Corrections Canada implements a program in which the participants may stay at the Labrador Friendship Centre for the duration of their day parole.

The Labrador Friendship Centre often makes an effort to assist people in obtaining good housing. A landlord list is available and people may be referred to housing organizations for help. In 1985 a study was conducted by the Friendship Centre of the housing conditions in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The research established that there was a housing shortage, especially for aboriginal people. A committee, started by the Labrador Friendship Centre, applied for funds from CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) under the Urban Native Housing Program. Funding was received and the 'Melville Native Housing Corporation' was structured and organized.

The Labrador Friendship Centre Outreach Program began in September 1992. This program is funded by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. The purpose of the program is to provide employment services to residents on Labrador's North coast. All the basic services offered by a Canada Employment Centre can be obtained through these outreach offices. There are three (3) staff working on a full-time basis. The outreach offices are currently in Hopedale and Postville, Labrador. Services from these places are available to all six of the aboriginal communities on the North Coast of Labrador.

There are counselling services provided through the Labrador Friendship Centre's community liaison staff member. Persons on day parole and people recently released from the Labrador Correctional Centre using the hostel are required to visit with this person on a weekly basis. Family, marriage, and individual counselling is also provided. Also, the Labrador Inuit Health Commission rents two offices from the Labrador Friendship Centre; one for an Addictions Counsellor, and one for a Family Violence Coordinator.

The Youth Career Drop-in Centre is funded under The Canada Youth Strategy program. The purpose of this program is to provide a youth counselling service that is available on a daily basis. A resource centre has been developed based on the identified needs of youth in the area. The counsellors assist youth in preparing their future goals and are accessible to young people for discussion of any other issues that may concern them. They advertise projects and events of special interest to youth and help teens establish contact with various community service groups.

The Labrador Friendship Centre features a boardroom, conference rooms, and a classroom. These can be rented to other organizations for meetings and seminars. If there is an aboriginal objective involved, the facility may be provided free of charge.

#### Other Services and Activities

- Annual Scholarship valued at \$500.00
- Thrift Shop
- Food Bank

- Senior Citizen's Van
- Residential Services Program
- Senior's Dances
- Cultural Night
- Card Games
- Community Service Orders
- Recreational Programs
- Bi-monthly newsletter
- Single Mothers Assistance

#### Education, Career Training:

The Labrador Friendship Centre has consistently served as a forum for education and training. Although preference is given to aboriginal people in some cases, courses are generally made available to everyone. These programs have been considered a success by those involved and there is a high completion rate. The staff and the Board of Directors have also benefitted from various seminars and training programs provided by the Friendship Centre.

Among these courses has been a Micro Computer Training Program, and evening courses offered in Word Perfect 5.1, Lotus 1-2-3, and Accpac/Bedford Accounting. The interest in the evening program and the regular course has been very good. A successful course has also been offered in Arts and Crafts. A language class in Inuktitut has been offered both at the beginner and advanced level. Interest in the beginner program was good with 36 persons registering for the course, but the advanced class had to be cancelled due to low enrolment.

The Labrador Friendship Centre is in the process of developing an Aboriginal Journalism Program to be implemented in September 1995. This program is being funded by Pathways Labrador, a local management board on which the Labrador Friendship Centre has representation. Taking into consideration the number of media outlets; radio, television and newspaper, the potential for employment in the area of journalism is very high and is a practical consideration. The course outline, developed by an assistant professor from Carlton's School of Journalism in Ottawa, is now complete and the next phase will be to develop the delivery part of the program. It will be run over a period of two years and will be offered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

#### Justice:

The Labrador Friendship Centre is now an integral liaison between legal organizations and aboriginal people. The hostel provides accommodations for those awaiting trial, newly released inmates from the Correctional institute, and those in the Day Parole program managed by Corrections Canada. Friendship Centre clientele

may be referred to affiliate organizations such as Labrador Legal Services or Legal Aid for counsel. Counselling is provided for people with legal problems by the community liaison worker. A recreation program for the Labrador Correctional Centre is provided for the inmates by the Labrador Friendship Centre's Program Director. Also, the Community Liaison worker assists in providing an Anger Management program at the Correctional Centre.

#### Health:

The Labrador Friendship Centre fills an important accommodations need for the aboriginal health organizations in the area. Innu Nations and the Labrador Inuit Health Commission both use the hostel as a place to stay for incoming coastal patients requiring care at the Melville hospital. Appointments and transportation can also be arranged through interaction with the hospital, health organizations, and the Labrador Friendship Centre. Without this service, people from the coast requiring medical care would have no place to stay besides a hotel, which would be too expensive for the organizations to pay.

#### Staff:

The permanent staff of the Labrador Friendship Centre are the most knowledgeable of resources when it comes to the inner workings of this organization. They are the best people to ask when it comes to suggestions for improvement in these major areas of concern. They have the hands on experience of helping to implement the many programs and they know what works and what is redundant. Through discussion and surveys, the input of the staff on the three main issues; Education, Health, and Justice, has been obtained. A section on cultural concerns was also addressed in the survey for the Friendship Centre staff.

In the area of education the staff opinion was unanimous that what was being offered was good--the computer courses, the language courses, and the various seminars that come through. However, it was felt that there should be research done by the Labrador Friendship Centre on the job market in the area. Once the most viable career opportunities were determined courses could subsequently be developed to train people, to give them the skills needed to obtain these jobs. It was also suggested that the evening computer courses should be endowed with instructors as qualified as those who ran the day programs. Another recommendation was that more funding be pumped into the educational concerns of aboriginal people. If the Friendship Centre could provide more educational opportunities it could pave the road to a more prosperous future for the aboriginal community.



It was also stated that other aboriginal organizations could assist in enhancing the training offered by the Labrador Friendship Centre by gaining feedback from their own clientele as to what they would like to have available with regards to career training. Other organizations could combine knowledge with the Friendship Centre and help to prepare relevant programs and provide better and more efficient training. In addition, the Labrador Friendship Centre, with its new classroom and conference room facilities, would be a great forum for the training programs of other aboriginal organizations.

With regards to justice, it was generally felt that the current accommodation services are necessary and doing well. One suggestion was that the Labrador Friendship Centre should develop a committee, solely to create a networking system, so that the Friendship Centre can become more closely involved with the legal concerns of its aboriginal clientele. This committee could determine the major problems that need to be tackled (ie: court language interpretation, alcohol related offenses) and develop programs designed to alleviate these within the Friendship Centre's clientele. Another opinion was that other organizations should periodically provide detailed reports of the services they provide so that the Centre can make more efficient referrals.

In the health related field, the staff felt that the current services were satisfactory. One opinion was that the security personnel should have CPR and First Aid in case a hostel occupant requires immediate medical attention. Another recommendation was that the staff should be trained to know the health issues of aboriginal people and be available to provide information on preventive measures as people pass through. This could be provided through training workshops with aboriginal health organizations. It is agreed that there is a shortage in language interpretation at the Melville Hospital and this is causing problems for aboriginal people in receiving the best health care. Perhaps the Friendship Centre could be doing more to alleviate this problem.

The Friendship Centre admits that they are moderately deficient in the area of cultural promotion and cross cultural training. Although there are some culturally-oriented goings on (ie: cultural night, dances, games, and activities to meet other aboriginal people) there should be more in the way of cultural preservation. The staff is not currently provided with cross-cultural orientation when they come on line. This should be focused on in the future. It is important that non-aboriginal staff have a working knowledge of the basic cultural differences before they delve into the lives of aboriginal people.

Clientele:

The data for this small segment of the report on the Labrador Friendship Centre was obtained through casual discussion and anonymous surveys of the people who use the hostel on a regular basis. The majority of the hostel occupants at the time were interviewed and the researcher can hence draw some general conclusions on the attitude towards the services received.

The results were almost completely positive. People are satisfied with their accommodations and enjoy the meals that they are served in the Friendship Centre kitchen. They feel they are treated politely by the staff and there is nothing lacking in basic service. When asked about cultural concerns, most indicated that they would like to see more offered by the Friendship Centre in this respect. Otherwise, things are fine.

This segment of the report is covered by issue. It is impossible to include information on every interview and survey conducted. The individuals from each organization who provided the most detailed information and opinions were given attention. Often, the suggestions of these people were common to all of the organizations on a given topic. As a result, no one was left out. In the following sections the main concerns will be introduced again and the recommendations will be mentioned for each one.

### Common Grounds Organizations

The Common Grounds Organizations in this report are organizations who, like the Labrador Friendship Centre, are in place to help aboriginal people. They are funded by aboriginal government programs and agencies. Their purpose is to assist aboriginal people with some aspect of their life. They may cover a broad spectrum of concerns or they may deal with only one issue. These organizations deal with the Labrador Friendship Centre on a regular basis and some objectives of each group are met through these interactions. The input of these organizations and their relation to the Labrador Friendship Centre is essential to this report. Information and suggestions made by the key people in these groups will show whether the Labrador Friendship Centre is being effective in the implementation of certain programs and how we can become more efficient in their eyes.

#### Education:

As aforementioned, the Labrador Friendship Centre has served as a forum for the training seminars of other organizations. The upcoming Journalism Program to be offered at the Friendship Centre is being offered by Pathways Labrador. Pathways is a strategy, rather than a program, and is run by a local management board on which the Labrador Friendship Centre has representation. They are an aboriginal organization with a definite training mandate. Pathways offers funding for both organizational and individual clients under the Canada Job Strategy Program.

Carter Russell, who runs the current Pathways office, and is generally a consultant, feels that one of the main barriers is communication. Lingual and cultural differences complicate this problem. Also, it is difficult for an organization to fund post secondary training opportunities when a great deal of aboriginal people have not graduated from high school. There should be more Stay in School initiatives that are targeted towards aboriginal teens. It would help a great deal if the Canada Job Strategy's regulations were revised to allow funding for Adult Basic Education.

Mr. Russell felt there needs to be changes in the manner in which things are done in the education system to better accommodate

aboriginal needs. He feels that it would be better to have more training organizations in place in the Labrador area to create a competitive atmosphere, thus upping the standards of curriculum and instruction. Mr. Russell feels the Labrador Friendship Centre could contribute to this in developing more of their own training programs. The Labrador Friendship Centre should play an advocacy role in all aboriginal training ventures. They could be an excellent resource for groups developing these courses and could help them create more efficient systems. The Friendship Centre is positioned to play this role because it represents all aboriginal people and has a training history.

The Labrador Inuit Association is a group which provides assistance to their membership in dealing with a broad number of issues. Elaine Anderson is the Education Counsellor for the Labrador Inuit Association. She is involved mostly at a post secondary level although she helps with Stay in School Initiatives at the high school level. L.I.A. rarely provides trade funding. They usually provide funding for their regular members for post secondary programs at an accredited college or institution.

Ms. Anderson feels the main barriers facing aboriginal people in the area of education are; problems in finishing high school, lack of motivation or relevance in the community, and the school system not meeting the needs of aboriginal students. There often seems to be no effort by school staff in providing more culturally relevant curriculum. It is not recognized as an issue by some. There should be a greater focus on Stay in School Initiatives, there is no point in funding post secondary courses if a person cannot get past the high school level. It would be good to have more aboriginal teachers as role models.

Ms. Anderson has interacted with the Labrador Friendship Centre over minor things. She has utilized the hostel for her incoming MedQuest students. She's used the boardroom on occasion for meetings. She has spoken to the Youth Counsellors at the Friendship Centre and discussed the possibility of making referrals for one another.

Ms. Anderson thinks the Labrador Friendship Centre could help in the area of housing for post secondary students. A major problem for first time students in a new area is obtaining a decent housing situation while they are trying to keep up with their studies, orientation, and expenses. The Labrador Friendship Centre could create a network with the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. Together they could arrange to have the aboriginal students stay in the St. John's Centre until suitable housing has been obtained.

Tim MacNeil, L.I.A.'s Education Coordinator raised much of the same issues. He coordinates the funding and training efforts for L.I.A. Unlike Ms. Anderson, he handles concerns at the public education level as well as post secondary concerns. L.I.A. is designing its

own orientation project for aboriginal students. These are basically seminars relevant to and targeted at aboriginal students. The Labrador Friendship Centre could possibly assist in this effort.

The long term goals of the L.I.A. with regards to education are to own and control their own school boards. The communities can then define what their educational needs are and the new boards can be adjusted to reflect these needs. Mr. MacNeil feels that the current system is not working for aboriginal students. It is not producing graduates, many are dropping out.

#### Justice:

Shirley Flowers and Linda Anderson of Labrador Legal Services said that the only involvement they have with the Labrador Friendship Centre is through the Day Parole Program done through Corrections Canada. Labrador Legal Services acts as a liaison between the Labrador Friendship Centre and Corrections Canada in making arrangements for an inmate to stay in the hostel for the duration of his/her day parole. There is a selections committee with representatives from the Friendship Centre and Labrador Legal Services who decide which people are suitable for this program. Rules and regulations for each individual are set out by Corrections Canada. Labrador Legal Services has a proposal on order for a real halfway house so the Labrador Friendship Centre may not have to serve this role in the future.

The main barriers in the justice system are cultural differences, new language, long drawn out trials, and isolation from the community. Labrador Legal Services would like to have a cross-cultural advisory committee to help out with aboriginal legal matters. There has been a rise in the percentage of serious crimes as of late. There needs to be a change in policing, courts, and sentencing to better accommodate aboriginal people.

Labrador Legal Services would like to see more community control. There is too much outside influence and it is being met with hostility. It is obviously making no headway, the system has not improved. Issues have been researched to death. It's time to do something about these problems.

If there are going to be research projects and consultation between aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups, they should be meaningful consultations. They should not be in place only for formality's sake. The ideas of aboriginal people are invaluable because it is their problems that are being addressed and it is their lives that are effected by any decisions.

## Health:

The Labrador Inuit Health Commission is an affiliate of L.I.A. They are in charge of addressing the health concerns of the L.I.A. membership. Iris Allen, the Executive Director of L.I.H.C. for the Upper Lake Melville area, says their main focus right now is mental health and most of their programs development right now is aimed at providing more services in this area. They cover non-insured health benefits, mental health, addictions, family violence, rehabilitation, health related transportation and accommodations, etc.; basically all health concerns. Their newest program is called "Brighter Futures" and is for the health promotion of children and teens. They are trying to implement more programs for cultural training as the need arises. They sometimes hold cross-cultural seminars for other organizations.

L.I.H.C. would like to see a Regional Hospital constructed in Goose Bay. They would like to have representation on the Local Management Board for Health. They would also like more say on how the Grenfell Regional Health programs are run, especially with regards to the coast.

The L.I.H.C. is involved with the Labrador Friendship Centre in accommodating coastal patients that are visiting Goose Bay for medical care. Ms. Allen feels that better communication is needed between the Health Commission and the Labrador Friendship Centre on this issue. She feels there should be more counselling services available and there should be more follow-up in the communities. The Labrador Friendship Centre could play a part in this.

## Non-Aboriginal Organizations

### Education:

Winnie Montague, Inuit Education Coordinator for the Labrador Community College feels that the role of the Labrador Friendship Centre should be to assist aboriginal people in determining what their training needs are. The Centre should then support the development and implementation of programming which will meet those needs. Training programs should be based on a self sufficiency goal for a viable economy. The Labrador Community College has worked with the Labrador Friendship Centre in the past by supporting training which they have offered. This has been in the development of new programs and part time course offerings.

Fred Maclean, superintendent of the Labrador East Integrated School Board, acknowledges that there is not enough cross-cultural training provided for employees. The most important issues here are the lack of relevant materials and information for teaching aboriginal children and that native teaching role models are low in numbers. He states that their schools try to address the specific concerns of aboriginal people wherever possible. He suggests the use of funding from the Native Peoples Agreement in the Upper Lake Melville area as well as the coast. This would provide extra specific programs for L.I.A. members in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area where the majority of the membership lives. The Lab. East Integrated School Board is definitely open to suggestions and input from the Labrador Friendship Centre. They would like help with their Stay in School initiatives, Drug and Alcohol programs, etc. to help make them more culturally relevant to aboriginal students.

### Justice:

Susan Sparkes is the Classification Officer at the Labrador Correctional Centre. She does assignments and referrals for each of the inmates according to their identified needs. She designates their treatment to the proper program or agency. Ms. Sparkes stated that the main barriers that aboriginal people face in the Correctional Centre are cultural differences, language, incomprehension (many do not understand what has happened to them), isolation, and no family to provide support. Ms. Sparkes identified the main causes of a high crime rate among aboriginal communities as loss of cultural identity, lack of self esteem, alcohol abuse, low education, and lack of basic life skills. She showed that the situation appeared to be getting worse with the percentage of aboriginal offenders up significantly in comparison to last year.

The Labrador Correctional Centre has many programs in place, but none are exclusively for aboriginal people. Some are offered by aboriginal organizations but are available to anyone. The Labrador

Friendship Centre helps to run some of these programs. The community liaison worker helps with the Anger Management Program and the Program Director is responsible for the recreational activities of the inmates.

The current programs don't seem to be helping. Many offenders are repeats. Ms. Sparkes commented that this may be a result of lack of follow-up in the community. People are tempted to go back to their old habits once back in the same environment. The community has a responsibility to help.

The Labrador Correctional Centre often uses the hostel when an inmate is being released. In addition to this, the Correctional Centre could use some assistance in designing an orientation package for aboriginal inmates to help in understanding what is happening to when they are incarcerated. Providing more information on the justice system to the residents of the hostel might also help. The Labrador Friendship Centre has access to many aboriginal people each day.

Staff Sergeant Alec McInnis of the RCMP, Happy Valley-Goose Bay Detachment, indicated that they have the Aboriginal Development Program. With this program aboriginal people are hired on by the RCMP as regular members and given up to two years to meet the qualifications of the RCMP, i.e. education. He also said that cross cultural training is provided in basic training.

Mr. McInnis states that an introverted nature and the language barrier are major problems encountered by aboriginal people in dealing with the legal system. He feels that an interpreter on staff at the Provincial Court would prevent numerous delays and better accommodate aboriginal needs.

The Friendship Centre has interacted with the RCMP through Labrador Legal Services. It is thought that the relationship with the Labrador Friendship Centre is excellent. The RCMP appreciates the assistance in housing aboriginal people coming to Goose Bay for court or other legal proceedings. On many occasions the Labrador Friendship Centre has given clothing to scantily clad persons going to court. A high degree of professionalism is evident in the manner in which the Labrador Friendship Centre is run.

#### Health:

The Labrador Friendship Centre liaises with the Melville Hospital in providing accommodations and transportation for aboriginal people. The aboriginal health organizations make the contacts, arrangements, and pay the bills but the services provided by the Friendship Centre greatly facilitate their job. Boyd Rowe, the Administrator for the Melville Hospital, concludes that this service is being provided satisfactorily.



Mr. Rowe indicated, that since the Labrador Friendship Centre has access to so many people coming through, short term health programs could be made available to them on a temporary basis. Aboriginal people need more health information besides pamphlets. Communication is a major problem at the hospital for many aboriginal patients and they do not understand what's wrong with them or how to prevent it. There is a need for someone who can speak the language and understand the health problems to explain important issues for people. This service could be provided by the Labrador Friendship Centre.

Mr. Rowe also mentioned that he would like to use the Labrador Friendship Centre as a computer training base if possible. The hospital will need a more computer friendly staff in the future if they are to keep with the times. The Labrador Friendship Centre has the facilities to provide this.

Janet Cox, Assistant Director of Nursing Services, Public Health, said that a transcultural workshop provided by the L.I.H.C. was held in January '93 and was very successful. Hopefully this will be repeated. During the orientation of new staff, some cultural issues are discussed. Community Health works with the L.I.H.C. and Innu Health Commission at the hospital. Interpreter/translating services are provided through them at the different nursing stations. Community Health works closely with L.I.H.C. - especially with their psychologist and crisis teams. They try to coordinate mutual concerns with the different aboriginal groups.

Ms. Cox feels the Labrador Friendship Centre plays a valuable role in providing support to its clients. It is a support centre, a training center, and a necessary accommodations service for the people on the coast.

## Conclusion

Common themes can be found in the suggestions put forth by many individuals on the issues covered by this report. In all areas it was generally felt that cultural concerns should be given more attention. The common belief is that programs will be more effective and easy to accept if they are more culturally relevant to aboriginal people. The Labrador Friendship Centre can be an important reference organization in developing programs with a solid cultural basis.

In the area of education, it was ascertained that the Labrador Friendship Centre could be more active in the role of a forum for career training activities. Perhaps the centre could devote more time to creating its own training opportunities as well as providing the facilities for other organizations to continue their educational pursuits.

With regards to justice it was felt that the Labrador Friendship Centre was doing a fine job in providing accommodation services to released inmates of the Correctional Centre and in implementing the Day Parole Program. It was suggested that the Friendship Centre could help provide aboriginal clientele with information on the legal system so that they would be better prepared if they were to have an encounter with the law. The Friendship Centre could also become directly involved in helping to find interpreters for use by the courts and the Correctional Centre.

With health, communication was also a major concern. Again, the Friendship Centre could possibly make some recommendations on how to alleviate this problem. It was suggested that the communication lines between the aboriginal health organizations and the Friendship Centre be opened up a little more so that they can mutually provide better service with no confusion. Also, the Friendship Centre could be more active in providing preventative health information to its clientele. In addition, the Centre could increase the availability of their counselling services.

Overall, the Labrador Friendship Centre seems to be doing a fine job in meeting the needs of the aboriginal population of the Upper Lake Melville area and the people of the coast. The Centre is fitting in well with the services that other organizations offer and the interactions are mutually beneficial. The results of the research on the Labrador Friendship Centre was exceptionally positive.

It is hoped that this report will become a useful reference in the future for the Labrador Friendship Centre itself, aboriginal organizations, and for the various government agencies that have a vested interest in aboriginal issues. This report can serve as a needs assessment for the Centre and to provide a definite idea of what to focus on for future endeavours.

## Appendix

July 19/93

Dear Participant:

The Labrador Friendship Centre is now conducting research on the Aboriginal services in the area. We are in the process of compiling a report for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The data obtained through these surveys will be an integral part of our report. We are trying to determine where the Labrador Friendship Centre fits in in relation to the services provided by other organizations. With this information in hand we may better adjust to the needs of the Aboriginal community in the future.

Please elaborate on questions as much as possible. We want to know your ideas on important issues and possible solutions. Write N/A where necessary. We would appreciate a response by the end of this month. Susan Abbass, our researcher, will be in contact with you. If you have any questions contact her at the Labrador Friendship Centre: 896-3535 or 896-8302.

We Thank You for taking the time to complete our survey.

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Rennie Simms  
Executive Director

Common Grounds Organization Questions:

- 1) What is your mission statement as an organization? Who do you aim to serve?
- 2) What individual roles do your staff members play in accomplishing this objective?
- 3) What specific services or programs are offered by your organization for Aboriginal people? Please elaborate on the function of each service.

### Non-Aboriginal Organization Questions:

- 1) Does your organization run any programs or services strictly for Aboriginal people? Please elaborate on the function of each service.
- 2) Does your organization provide cross-cultural training for non-Aboriginal staff members? Through what type of programs is this accomplished?
- 3) Is there an Aboriginal reference person or group utilized by your organization in dealing with Native peoples?

### Health Issues:

- 1) List three to five major problems that Aboriginal people encounter when dealing with our current health system.
- 2) What programs does your organization offer for assistance of Aboriginal people with their health concerns?
- 3) What suggestions do you have for improvement of our health system to better accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people?
- 4) How has your organization interacted with the Labrador Friendship Centre in the past in aiding Aboriginal people with their health concerns?
- 5) What is your current relationship with the Friendship Centre with regards to this issue?
- 6) What role do you feel the Labrador Friendship Centre should play with regards to Aboriginal Health issues? What should we be focusing on to improve the situation in the future?

### The Legal System:

- 1) List three to five major problems Aboriginal people encounter when dealing with our current legal system.
- 2) What programs does your organization offer for assistance of Aboriginal people with their legal concerns?
- 3) What suggestions do you have for the improvement of the legal system to better accommodate the needs of Native people?

4) How has your organization interacted with the Labrador Friendship Centre in the past in aiding Aboriginal people with their legal concerns?

5) What is your current relationship with the Friendship Centre with regards to this issue?

6) What role do you feel the Labrador Friendship Centre should play with regards to Aboriginal legal issues? What should we be focusing on to improve the situation in the future?

#### Cultural and Transitional Services:

1) List three major influences that are causing Native people to lose aspects of their culture.

2) Through what programs does your organization assist Aboriginal people in retaining their culture?

3) What role do you feel the Labrador Friendship Centre plays with regards to Aboriginal cultural concerns? What should we be focusing on to improve the situation in the future?

#### Education, Career Training:

1) List five important problems that Aboriginal people encounter when dealing with our current education system.

2) What programs does your organization offer for assistance of Aboriginal people with their educational concerns? (With reference to public and post secondary education).

3) What suggestions do you have for improvement of existing education systems to better accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people?

4) How has your organization interacted with the Labrador Friendship Centre in the past in aiding Aboriginal people with their educational concerns?

5) What is your current relationship with the Friendship Centre with regards to this issue?

6) What role do you feel the Friendship Centre should play with regards to Aboriginal Educational issues? What should we be focusing on to improve the situation in the future?

Survey For:

LABRADOR FRIENDSHIP CENTRE:

Sec. 1

Standard General Information:

- 1) Briefly, what is the main objective of the Labrador Friendship Centre? Who do you aim to serve?
- 2) What individual roles do your staff members play in helping to accomplish this objective?
- 3) What day to day services for Aboriginal peoples are provided by your organization?
- 4) What needs of Native peoples are addressed through these services?
- 5) What type of funding do you receive? How is it directed? Is there a need for more funding? If so, in what areas?
- 6) Does the Labrador Friendship Centre have on-going working relations with other Aboriginal and non-aboriginal organizations? On what issues do you combine your work efforts?

Sec. 2

Cultural and Transitional Services:

- 1) Through what programs does the Labrador Friendship Centre contribute to self awareness and cultural education for it's Aboriginal membership?
- 2) What programs do you offer to aid Native peoples in their transition from their home community to an urban environment?
- 3) Is language interpretation available upon request for the clientele of the Friendship Centre?
- 4) Does your organization provide cross-cultural training for your non-Aboriginal staff members?
- 5) How do you think the Friendship Centre can improve the existing programs with regards to this issue? Can other organizations help?

### Health Issues:

- 1) List three to five major problems that Aboriginal people encounter when dealing with our current health system.
- 2) How does the Labrador Friendship Centre serve to alleviate these problems?
- 3) Do you think the Friendship Centre could do more to assist Aboriginal people with their health concerns? If so, how?
- 4) Can other organizations help the Labrador Friendship Centre in improving the health related services they offer? Explain.

### Legal Issues:

- 1) What role does the Labrador Friendship Centre play in assisting Aboriginal peoples with their legal concerns?
- 2) What suggestions do you have for possible improvement of the existing Friendship Centre services with regards to this issue?
- 3) How could the Justice system and other organizations interact with the Friendship Centre to provide better legal services to Aboriginal people?

### Education, Career Training:

- 1) What role does the Labrador Friendship Centre play in providing better education opportunities for Aboriginal people? What types of programs are available?
- 2) Do you have any suggestions as to how the Friendship Centre's existing educational programs could improve?
- 3) Please identify how other groups or organizations could be aiding the Friendship Centre in providing better educational services to Aboriginal people.

Thank You for Completing this Survey!



## Survey for Clientele and Membership

### Labrador Friendship Centre:

- 1) What services of the Labrador Friendship Centre have you used?
- 2) Were you satisfied with the service you received?
- 3) Please describe the conduct of the staff toward you.
- 4) What programs and services for Aboriginal peoples would you like to see offered by the Labrador Friendship Centre.



**The St. John's Native Friendship Centre**

*"Innut illengajut St. John's seliatunut"*

*"Innut papinini St. John's"*

*"For Native People coming to St. John's"*

**Aboriginal People in St. John's, Newfoundland**

**Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples  
August, 1993**

## **Aboriginal People in St. John's, Newfoundland**

### **1. Introduction**

The report focuses on the specific needs and issues of the transient and permanent Aboriginal populations in the urban centre of St. John's Newfoundland. These populations, made up of Inuit, Innu, Kablunangajuit (settlers of combined Inuit and European descent), Metis and Micmac, often face particular difficulties in adjusting to life in the city. The St. John's Native Friendship Centre (SJNFC) exists to assist these populations in meeting their needs and accessing educational, legal, health and social services.

#### **1.1 The Demographic Situation**

The Aboriginal populations of Newfoundland and Labrador live at a considerable distance from the capital city of St. John's. About 5100 Inuit and Kablunangajuit people live in northern Labrador in communities such as Nain, Makkovik, Hopedale, Rigolet, as well as in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the main urban centre of Labrador. The Innu, a group of about 1,500, live in two communities in northern Labrador. The larger community of Sheshatshit is connected by road to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Utshimassits, also known as Davis Inlet, lies further north and has year-round air service as well as a seasonal weekly boat service.

All of the Micmac communities are located on the island of Newfoundland, with approximately one dozen bands situated on the west coast. Several other bands are located on the central part of the island, near Gander and Glenwood. The only official reserve where status Indians of Micmac origin reside is at Conne River, on the south coast.

## **1.2 The Transient Aboriginal Population**

Aboriginal people are obliged to travel to St. John's for many reasons: medical, educational, legal and social. The SJNFC provides assistance to all Aboriginal persons who requests help in accessing programmes and services. This group makes up the largest portion of our client population.

## **1.3 The Resident Aboriginal Population**

The Aboriginal population of St. John's is not large: the Innu population of the city, for instance, is less than a dozen. A combined estimate of the total population of all Aboriginal groups in St. John's (Inuit/Kablunangajuit, Metis, Micmac, and Innu) is 750. Inuit make up the largest portion of this group, followed by the Micmac. The Metis people reside mainly on the Avalon Peninsula but outside of the city of St. John's.

Virtually all of the Aboriginal people living in St. John's relocated here from elsewhere on the island or Labrador, or from other regions of Canada. They may relocate to the city for personal or economic reasons- often, they are young, more educated Aboriginals looking for work. At least 50 students live in St. John's throughout the academic year, returning home on breaks and during the summer. There are no accurate numbers available, however, as most schools and institutions do not record the number of Aboriginal students. The Centre hopes to begin a research project in the upcoming year to determine the exact numbers of aboriginal residents and students in the St. John's area.

#### **1.4 The St. John's Native Friendship Centre**

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre was founded in 1983, and is part of a network of over 100 such Centres in most major cities across Canada. The Centre provides a wide range of services for Aboriginal people residing in the St. John's area and for the large number of Aboriginal people from rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador who must travel to the city to gain access to health, educational and other facilities which are not available in their communities. The Centre also provides a meeting place through which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can socialize.

Of the approximately 850 Aboriginal persons who travel to St. John's to access services each year, many face special difficulties, such as language and cultural differences, as well as difficulty in orienting themselves to the city. The Native Friendship Centre offers concrete assistance such as provision of transportation, translation, volunteer visits, and help in securing accommodations. Core funding for the Centre is provided through the Department of the Secretary of State, and service and training programmes are funded through a variety of sources.

The objectives of the SJNFC are:

- to provide support and referral services to Aboriginal people and other people requiring assistance in St. John's;
- to assist Aboriginal people with the problems of adjusting to an urban environment;
- to act as a resource centre for Aboriginal and other people in the areas of accommodation, transportation, recreation, and social, cultural and educational activities;
- to promote public awareness of Aboriginal culture;

- to provide and facilitate interpretation and translation as needed;
- to provide liaison and clarification services on behalf of Aboriginal people with respect to other agencies and institutions.

## **2. The Issues**

### **2.1 Health Care**

St. John's is the only tertiary health care centre in the province. In addition, many medical specialists are available only in St. John's. This means that almost all Aboriginal people must travel to St. John's for medical reasons sooner or later. Indeed, medical patients make up the largest number of transient Aboriginal people served by the SJNFC. In most Aboriginal communities there is a nursing station, and a doctor visits periodically. Patients in Labrador who need treatment are usually first sent to the Melville hospital in Goose Bay and often to the Grenfell hospital in St. Anthony, at the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula. If the treatment needed is not available at these two institutions, patients are then sent to St. John's. Patients may arrive on a regularly scheduled airline flight or they may arrive by air ambulance, usually late at night.

Arrival in St. John's is often traumatic: the person may be in the midst of a medical crisis, or they may simply be unaccustomed to the language and culture. Many Aboriginal people require a great deal of support to enable them to access services and avoid difficulties in communication and transportation. Aboriginal persons must also deal with subtle, and sometimes more overt,

incidents of racism. In cases of mental health crisis, the person may already be agitated, violent, and afraid. Given these obstacles, appointments may not be met, and treatment may be discontinued. In such situations, costly and traumatic medical services may become band-aids when the patient returns home without adequate treatment. Indeed, it is likely that they may need to return to the city in the near future.

With these difficulties, it is our belief that every Aboriginal person arriving in St. John's for medical or mental health services should have the opportunity to also access the services of an SJNFC support worker. Since 1989, the SJNFC has offered the services of an Innu and an Inuit support worker. The Centre is generally contacted by representatives of the Labrador Inuit Association or the Innu Nation when an individual from their communities is travelling to St. John's. Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that Native people are alone, due to lack of communication with the SJNFC or as a result of insufficient resources. There is no effective communication system to notify the Friendship Centre when an Aboriginal person living in St. John's is admitted to hospital. In many cases, support workers at the SJNFC are only notified of a Native person's admission to hospital in St. John's through word of mouth or via an accidental encounter. Support workers are invaluable in assisting Native people in accessing medical resources, but they must first be aware that the need for their services is present.

In addition to the need for support workers, Aboriginal users of the health care system often require the services of advocates and translators. In cases where Aboriginal patients are not English speaking, it is essential not only that translation services be provided, but that the



translator advocate on behalf of patients to ensure that their rights and interests vis-a-vis health care are upheld. Culture and language differences, along with insensitivity on the part of some health care workers, often act as a barrier to health, as the patient may be lacking in essential information, such as options for treatment or use of prescription drugs. Often, for patients referred to St. John's, such information is literally a matter of life and death.

Clearly, there is a need for the provision of trained support, interpretation and advocacy workers with respect to Aboriginal people working their way through the health care system. To date, there has been no financial support from the provincial government in this or any other area. The SJNFC, the most suitable organization out of which to channel these services, is already operating on an inadequate budget, and resources are stretched to the limit. We believe that provision of services as outlined here would not only better serve the needs of the Aboriginal population, but would ultimately be more cost effective as it would help prevent temporary solutions and unnecessary return visits.

Finally, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre has recognized the need for a hostel in the St. John's area, where families of patients, and patients who are not admitted to hospital, may stay while they are in St. John's. Numerous studies have been prepared, and the community is very much in support of the idea. Accommodation is often difficult to secure: a number of volunteers have accommodated Aboriginal visitors over the years, but this places an unnecessarily large burden on them. And while the SJNFC has cooperated with Aboriginal organizations to ensure that visitors are appropriately housed, the present system is inefficient as Aboriginal visitors may

be scattered throughout the city. It is felt that a hostel would be an effective means of bringing Aboriginal people together for support and friendship, as well as providing emergency housing to local and visiting Aboriginal people. While the need for the hostel has been apparent for some time, financing the venture has proven difficult. A commitment of funds has been made by the Native Directorate of the Department of the Secretary of State, through the National Association of Friendship Centres, but SJNFC must raise nearly \$40,000 ourselves. The fundraising task has fallen on the already overworked Centre staff, which makes achievement of this goal even more daunting. Contributions towards the fundraising goal, or the provision of funds to increase staff at the Centre to meet the demands, would be helpful.

#### Recommendations:

- That the provincial and federal governments provide adequate financing for patient advocate positions.
- That funding be provided through the federal and provincial governments to allow sharing of information between Aboriginal communities in Canada on alternative medical models, particularly in the area of mental health.
- That a program be established to train Aboriginal translators/advocates, and that these workers receive compensation in line with that provided to interpreters of European languages.
- That a policy be developed by the provincial Department of Health, in conjunction with the SJNFC, to improve communications with SJNFC as a means of ensuring that the SJNFC is notified of any Aboriginal persons admitted to hospital in St. John's.
- That the provincial Department of Justice implement a policy to ensure that the SJNFC is contacted when an Aboriginal person is sent to St. John's for psychiatric assessment or for processing through the legal system.
- That the provincial Department of Education, and Memorial University, along with the major hospitals, co-operate to ensure that every student in the medical professions is exposed to coursework in cross-cultural education and Aboriginal health issues.

-That increased funding be provided to the Centre to allow for completion of necessary projects such as the establishment of a hostel.

## **2.2 The Legal System**

Policing duties in Newfoundland and Labrador are shared by the RCMP and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, with the Constabulary operating in the St. John's area, and the RCMP operating throughout the remainder of the province.

Until recently, Aboriginal people from Labrador who were held by the RCMP were transported to the island. Male convicts serving sentences of less than two years were held at one of two institutions in the St. John's area: Her Majesty's Penitentiary and the Salmonier Correctional Centre. Since 1985, Labrador men serving sentences of less than two years are generally held at the Labrador Correctional Centre in Goose Bay. For various reasons, such as while awaiting trial, a small number of Aboriginal offenders still come to St. John's to serve their time.

The only prison for women in the province is the Stephenville Correctional Centre on the west coast of the island, approximately mid-way between St. John's and Labrador. As there is no Friendship Centre on that area (the only Centre on the island is in St. John's), women have no access to the support services provided for men in St. John's by SJNFC.

The number of Aboriginal people incarcerated in Newfoundland prisons is estimated to be 90, or approximately 3.4% of the total prison population. According to the provincial Department of Justice, Aboriginal persons make up less than 4% of the total population of Newfoundland and

Labrador, and so are incarcerated at a rate seven times that of non-Aboriginal residents of the province. It is also reported that Aboriginal prisoners tend to serve longer terms than the non-Aboriginal population. Those held in Newfoundland prisons are held on offenses such as physical and sexual assault, illegal use of weapons, breach of probation and theft. Sentences of more than two years are always served outside of the province, generally at Springhill in Nova Scotia or Dorchester in New Brunswick.

Incarceration is often a frightening and isolating experience for the Aboriginal person. The offender may face harassment and discrimination from other inmates or from employees. They may lose touch with their families and their culture while incarcerated. No organized programmes exist for Aboriginal offenders in Newfoundland correctional centres, and the number of treatment and rehabilitation programmes for all prisoners is minimal. If successful rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into Aboriginal communities is the goal, we are a long way from making this happen. Supportive services from the SJNFC offer minimal assistance to the offender, and help the offender maintain a connection with his or her culture and community.

Generally, requests for support come directly from the prisoner. The Support Worker may visit the correctional centre, or may facilitate the visits of friends and relatives. There is a need for additional services, however, such as advocacy to help offenders access the few services that are available to them, and to ensure that their rights are protected. And while communications with corrections staff has been positive and relatively regular, a cultural education programme for staff

would be helpful in ensuring that Aboriginal prisoners receive fair and understanding treatment while incarcerated.

Additionally, the formation of Aboriginal brotherhood and sisterhood groups within the correctional centres might provide support and help in the rehabilitation process through encouraging spirituality and healing.

Finally, every effort should be made to permit Aboriginal prisoners to be held in centres closest to their homes to allow the continued support of their families and communities. Where this is not possible, support workers and advocates are particularly necessary.

Recommendations:

- That Correctional facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador embark on a training programme for corrections staff in the areas of cross-cultural and Aboriginal awareness.
- That mental health assessment and treatment facilities for offenders be provided as soon as possible in Labrador.
- That a correctional centre for women be established in Labrador.
- That support be given to prisoners to enable them to organize Aboriginal brotherhood and sisterhood groups within each correctional centre.
- That funding be provided for the assistance of Aboriginal support workers, counsellors, advocates and interpreters within the prison system.

## **2.3 Education**

Although there are a number of vocational institutions springing up throughout Newfoundland

and Labrador, St. John's remains the educational centre for the province, providing a number of technical colleges and the only university in the province, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN).

Education for Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador is one area which seems to be functioning relatively well, yet much remains to be done. There is a growing need for educational support and financing as more and more Aboriginal people are prepared and motivated for higher education. Meeting this challenge will require co-ordination of efforts between Aboriginal communities, educational institutions, and the provincial and federal governments. Adequate preparation of students in high school, particularly in the maths and sciences, is also essential if Aboriginal students are to enter and complete post-secondary education programmes.

Most post-secondary students receive funding for their education through their band councils. The Labrador Inuit Association, for example, funds approximately 150 students each year, through funding provided by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Generally, students are adequately funded so that all costs of tuition, housing, and other expenses are covered. There are occasional cases of students having to secure loans through the Canada Student Loans programme, but such situations appear to be rare.

But although funding may not be a problem, students arriving in St. John's experience many of the same feelings as described in previous sections: confusion, isolation, fear. They also have

many of the same issues: language difficulties, racism, and culture differences. They may also have problems in getting oriented to the city, and thus securing safe, affordable housing may be difficult. Material support and peer support are essential if Aboriginal students are to complete their educational programmes successfully.

In the experience of the SJNFC, programmes with small class sizes and an adult education orientation are preferred by Aboriginal people engaged in higher education. Services such as day care, and counselling and support programmes, go a long way towards helping the Native student complete his or her educational career. It is also felt that literacy training for Aboriginal residents of St. John's should be a priority.

It is impossible to determine the exact numbers of post-secondary students in St. John's as schools do not record information on ethnic background; where information can be gathered, some individuals may not self-identify as Aboriginal.

#### **2.3.1. Vocational training**

A growing number of students funded by the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) enter specific programs in government funded community and technical colleges, such as the Cabot and Marine Institutes, as well as in private institutions.

The role of the Centre is to help these students orient themselves to the city, assist in finding

housing if requested, offer peer support and provide office equipment and computers for their use.

### **2.3.2 University**

The numbers of students (primarily Micmac and Inuit) enrolled in post-secondary studies at Memorial University is also steadily increasing. Students can enrol in first-year studies in several communities throughout the province, but degrees are completed on the main campus in St. John's. The majority of these students are Inuit, and receive funding through the Labrador Inuit Association.

But despite increasing enrolment of Aboriginal students, the only programme geared specifically to Aboriginal students at MUN is a Bachelor of Education Degree (Native and Northern). There has been no initiative on the part of the University to establish any type of Aboriginal Studies program. Ad hoc efforts by individual faculty members are starting, but the process is very slow. In addition, integration of Aboriginal content in other coursework is very limited.

The number of Innu students involved in post-secondary education remains quite low, with the majority associated with the Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL).

Since 1991, a Native Liaison Officer has been available to all Aboriginal students enrolled in, or considering entering, post-secondary education programmes. This position, which is funded through the LIA by Indian Affairs, has been the source of much needed support and assistance



to more than 200 students each year. This office assists students in course selection, orientation to the school and to the city, assists in the housing search, and serves many other important functions. It is essential that this service be maintained.

There is also an Aboriginal students' society at the University, which provides an important social network for all students of indigenous descent.

Recommendations:

- That resources be made available for Aboriginal literacy programmes.
- That projects such as the LIA-funded Native Liaison Officer receive continued financial support.
- That provincial and federal governments offer encouragement and incentives to post-secondary institutions to increase Aboriginal content in coursework, and to provide a Native Studies programme.
- That the provincial department of education ensure that Aboriginal students are adequately prepared to enter post-secondary institutions by providing adequate support and resources to Aboriginal schools.

### **3. Job Training**

According to information from Canada Employment and Immigration, Aboriginal unemployment rates are twice the national average. Job training is seen as an important means of bringing Aboriginal people into the labour market and improving their standard of living. The two target groups of such programmes are people with few skills and little education who require a more general and comprehensive training, and more educated persons who require specific skills training. Programmes such as the Native Internship Programme and the Canadian Native

Business Programme provide employment and training to post-secondary students. The provincial Department of Social Services occasionally offers a community development programme as funding becomes available.

The primary programme used by the SJNFC is the "Pathways to Success" programme, which is offered in partnership between CEIC and Aboriginal groups. The SJNFC has accessed this source of funding for the last 4 years, and has provided training in areas such as craft business development, research, and business administration. The projects generally employ two or three people at a time, and run from 16 weeks to one year. While sometimes helping Aboriginal people learn important and marketable skills, such projects often take on a "make work" nature, as there is inadequate funding to continue the training for a substantial period of time.

The "Pathways to Success" program now has an annual budget of \$574,000 for groups in the eastern and central regions of Newfoundland- a separate budget is available for individual projects. As the number of groups and individuals applying for this funding increases, it is becoming more difficult for the Centre to initiate meaningful training programmes for the Aboriginal population in St. John's. The Centre feels that increased funding to allow for more participants, and extending the time frame to allow for thorough training, would improve the quality of the training and help ensure that the programme goals are met.

Finally, there is speculation that the "Pathways" programme is being abused by non-Aboriginal people: as there is no proof of Aboriginal descent required in order to receive funding through

the programme, it is felt that non-Aboriginal persons may be tying up funds directed towards the Aboriginal population. Since there are a wide variety of training programmes directed toward the non-Native population, we believe that efforts should be made to ensure that Aboriginal training programmes reach the targeted population.

Recommendations:

- That CEIC make efforts, within the bounds of Human Rights legislation, to ensure that Aboriginal training programmes are being used by Aboriginal people only.
- That the federal government increase funding to Aboriginal training programmes.

#### **4. Social Issues**

Like many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, Aboriginal communities have been plagued by social problems such as sexual and physical abuse of women, elders and children, substance abuse, violence, and crime. While a full discussion of the underlying issues is beyond the scope of this paper, it seems clear that issues related to self-determination, poverty, racism and cultural loss are at play. And while this report intends to only address social problems and issues related to Aboriginal people living in St. John's, it is also clear that these problems are present throughout all our communities.

In some areas, for instance, substance abuse has become an epidemic, and people are dying. This issue in particular requires immediate attention to prevent further loss of life and breakdown of our communities. Aboriginal people may flee from their homes to St. John's to avoid some of these problems, only to find that they exist in the city as well.

Some specific problems existing in St. John's include poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and violence. The isolation of Aboriginal people often exacerbates these problems, since it may be difficult to access services, or find appropriate help and support.

Frequently, social problems of Aboriginal people go unrecognized by workers in hospital, mental health and corrections facilities. A woman who has been the victim of sexual abuse, for instance, may be treated for psychiatric illness; or a man who does not know how to access social services may be charged with theft. Lack of advocates and support services, language differences, and differing sets of life skills often combine to produce inappropriate responses to social problems. Again, it is a case of providing education to counsellors, social workers, and other front line workers, as well as ensuring that support workers from SJNFC are available to all.

Non-Aboriginal community agencies and social services are plagued by problems of underfunding, as well as the cultural difference problems. These agencies refer Aboriginal clients back to the Native Friendship Centre, which is, in many cases, unable to provide satisfactory assistance. The Centre is understaffed, and support workers are not trained to provide addictions or sexual abuse counselling, nor have they been trained in suicide prevention. In addition to providing cultural information and training to non-Aboriginal counsellors and social workers, the SJNFC feels that such services should be offered out of the Centre.

Many Aboriginal people in St. John's also face difficulty in securing safe, affordable housing. Social Service recipients receive insufficient housing allowances, and are forced to live in run-

down boarding houses and apartments. The SJNFC has identified housing as an important issue for Aboriginal people living in St. John's, but due to financial and time constraints, we have been unable to adequately address this problem. We require resources to help us improve the housing conditions of Aboriginal people in St. John's- assistance from the provincial government, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and the Federal government is necessary.

In terms of social interaction and community building, factors such as discrimination, racism, cultural and language differences make it difficult for Aboriginal people to build relationships with others in the community. The SJNFC serves the important role of providing a space out of which people can get together and hold social gatherings.

#### Recommendations:

- That increased funding be provided to SJNFC for a wide range of Aboriginal cultural and social programs and activities.
- That funding be provided through the provincial Department of Social Services to hire an Aboriginal counsellor or social worker who will operate out of the Centre.
- That the provincial and federal governments, along with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, co-operate with the SJNFC to improve the housing situation for Aboriginal residents of St. John's.
- That assistance be provided to the SJNFC to allow for increased cultural education programmes for counsellors and front line workers.

#### **5. The Role of the Centre**

Many of the activities of the Centre, while successful, could be improved through increased service. Areas such as public education, and cross-cultural training for prison and hospital staff

could be increased. Contact with, and support for, Aboriginal students could also be upgraded through the provision of more support workers.

The Centre has been remarkably successful in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people in St. John's, despite inadequate resources. Overtaxed volunteers and staff, inadequate numbers of translators, lack of training, and lack of cooperation on the part of the provincial government, has brought the Centre to a crisis point.

Aboriginal people living in, or travelling through St. John's deserve fair treatment and access to necessary services. Whether in hospitals or in post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal people require support and assistance in order to receive the same services as the non-Aboriginal population.

Ultimately, it is in the interest of the provincial and federal governments, as well as the interests of Aboriginal people, to see that these needs are met. Effective and efficient use of medical services requires understanding of the treatment, which may require supportive translation services. Avoidance of repeat offenders, and the costs to the community and to the justice system, will be more likely if offenders maintain contact with their culture, and are offered appropriate rehabilitative services. Encouraging and supporting Aboriginal students through the higher education process will ultimately mean improvements in the self-esteem of students and communities, and will discourage reliance on employment and social programmes.

The recommendations listed in this report reflect the needs and rights of Aboriginal people, but they are also sensible and will prove cost effective.

The SJNFC is the obvious centre out of which to provide many of these services. We have a proven record of service to the community, and a commitment to carry on. But adequate financing is essential if this is to happen. We can no longer meet the ever-increasing demands of the Aboriginal population in the St. John's area without added financial support. While the federal government has been at the forefront of providing such funding, support from the provincial government has been almost non-existent. It is imperative, at this time, that both governments work together to ensure that needs are met and that the SJNFC is sufficiently funded to improve service to the Aboriginal population.

## **7. Summary of Recommendations**

**Overall recommendation:** That the Centre be provided with adequate, sustaining funding, through co-operation between federal and provincial governments, to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal people travelling to, and living in, St. John's are met.

**Specific funding requirements include:**

- financing for patient advocate positions.
- funding to allow sharing of information between Aboriginal communities in Canada on alternative medical models, particularly in the area of Mental Health.
- funding to the Centre to allow for completion of necessary projects such as the establishment of a hostel.
- funding for an Aboriginal counsellor or social worker who will operate out of the

Centre.

- funding to establish a programme to train Aboriginal translators/advocates, and to ensure that these workers receive compensation in line with that provided to interpreters of European languages.
- funding be provided for Aboriginal support workers, counsellors, advocates and interpreters within the prison system.
- continued funding to the Native Student Liaison Officer.
- increased funding to Aboriginal training programmes.
- project funding to the SJNFC to allow for increased cultural education programmes for counsellors and front line workers.
- resources for Aboriginal literacy programmes.

#### **Policy recommendations:**

- That a policy be developed by the provincial Department of Health, in conjunction with the SJNFC, to improve communications with SJNFC as a means of ensuring that the SJNFC is notified of any Aboriginal persons admitted to hospital in St. John's.
- That the provincial Department of Justice implement a policy to ensure that the SJNFC is contacted when an Aboriginal person is sent to St. John's for psychiatric assessment or for processing through the legal system.
- That the provincial Department of Education, and Memorial University, along with the major hospitals, co-operate to ensure that every student in the medical professions is exposed to coursework in cross-cultural education and Aboriginal health issues.
- That Correctional facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador embark on a training programme for corrections staff in the areas of cross-cultural and Aboriginal awareness.
- That CEIC make efforts, within the bounds of Human Rights legislation, to ensure that Aboriginal training programmes are being used by Aboriginal people only.

#### **Recommendations for Improvements in Services:**

- That mental health assessment and treatment facilities for offenders be provided as soon as possible in Labrador.



- That a correctional centre for women be established in Labrador.

-That support be given to prisoners to enable them to organize Aboriginal brotherhood and sisterhood groups within each correctional centre.

- That the provincial Department of Education ensure that Aboriginal students are adequately prepared to enter post-secondary institutions by providing adequate support and resources to Aboriginal schools.

- That provincial and federal governments offer encouragement and incentives to post-secondary institutions to increase Aboriginal content in coursework, and to provide an Aboriginal Studies programme.

# ***Intervenor Project***

***Prepared***

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## INTERVENOR PROJECT

Since European contact, Aboriginal people across Canada have adapted their lifestyle in many diverse ways to European presence. The imposition of Eurocentric values and institutions has had the effect of distorting but not erasing traditional Aboriginal values. Traditional pursuits such as hunting and fishing became increasingly difficult to practice on the quickly diminished land base. Reserved lands for Aboriginal people were usually inadequate to sustain even the basic necessities of subsistence, which made socio-economic self-sufficiency virtually impossible. The resulting sub-standard lifestyle forced many Aboriginal people into urban areas in search of employment and economic security.

As the Aboriginal population began migrating into the cities it became painfully obvious that there existed a cultural gap between the non-native and the Aboriginal population. Friendship Centres were established in Canada almost 30 years ago in order to bridge this gap and to provide services to the ever increasing urban Aboriginal population. The constant influx of Aboriginal peoples into urban centres has continued for many decades, bringing today's total number of Urban Aboriginals to about 750,000.

Friendship Centres are defined as; " a non-political, non-sectarian, autonomous community based organization existing to administer and implement programs to meet the needs of Native people, either migrating to cities, or living in them." They are the largest national Aboriginal service organization in Canada that service the needs of the urban Aboriginal population.

Currently, there are 102 Native Friendship Centres found in Canada, as well as 7 Provincial/Territorial Associations, quite a growth from the first 2 centres that were established in the 1950's. They offer guidance, support, and assistance to all Aboriginal individuals who are residing in the urban area or who are migrating to them. These services cover a wide range of areas including; employment, housing, hostels, education, health, and cultural activities.

The *Micmac Native Friendship Centre*, located in Halifax, N.S., opened it's doors in 1973 and initially began serving urban Aboriginals in need of shelter. Since that time it has grown to include many other services, all of which still focus on the non-political needs of urban Aboriginal people.

It seems, however, that the low political profile of Friendship Centres across Canada does not warrant serious consideration from the politically charged mandate of the **Royal Commission**. The **Royal Commission** on Aboriginal Peoples recently began to look into the problems encountered by Aboriginal people in this country. The Commission has travelled to Aboriginal communities across Canada seeking input from the diverse original peoples. The *Micmac Native Friendship Centre*, as well as other Friendship Centres, had the opportunity to host a **Royal Commission** Hearing in November of 1992. At this discussion, the co-chairs heard from various representatives from the Halifax Friendship Centre, as well as students and non-native community members. They each presented their views on vital issues facing urban Aboriginal Peoples, in the hopes that their voices would be heard. Is it not the **Royal Commission's** role to use these various presentations as a basis for change in this country? If so, then there was far too little emphasis given to the role that Friendship Centres play in today's urban Aboriginal community.

For example, on page 4 of the Overview of the Second Round it was stated:

*The desire for equal treatment with other Aboriginal people is shared by women, by Metis, by non-status Indians, and by Inuit and status Indians living in urban areas or off reserves. This should be borne in mind in reading this report on the second round of hearings.*

Implicit in this quote, however, is that the "equal treatment" sought is with the only group not mentioned in the quote; that being status Indians living on reserves. The amount of attention devoted to the concerns of the aforementioned groups in the second round overview indicates that although the **Royal Commission** acknowledges the shared sentiments of the less politically motivated Aboriginal groups, it is not prepared to adequately address their concerns.

### **Justice**

Many issues were brought to the attention of the **Royal Commission** on November of 1992, at the *Micmac Native Friendship Centre*. All issues contained relevant testimonies from the urban Aboriginal population of Halifax, issues that require the immediate attention of the **Royal Commission** and the Governments of Canada. The Aboriginal population in Canada is one of many groups who are a minority in this country and because of our small numbers we often make up only a minute proportion of statistical reports in Canada. This is understandable, but unfortunate given that Aboriginal people are, by far, over-represented in the correctional institution. These disproportionate numbers alone should tell us that the Canadian judiciary system is failing Aboriginal people at every avenue.

Since 1967, there has been more than 30 justice studies and inquiries established to find solutions to the injustices inflicted on our people. These inquiries were initiated because of wrongful convictions of Aboriginals, such as the Marshall Inquiry in Nova Scotia. The Justice on Trial Inquiry in Alberta, was initiated as a response to the general concerns of the Aboriginal people and their dealings with the justice system. The recommendations generated by these inquiries were similar, but few were actually implemented. The Marshall Inquiry made 82 recommendations, that if established, may have prevented the wrongful imprisonment of Donald Marshall Jr. The *Micmac Native Friendship Centre* is currently involved with the development of two of these recommendations, those being the Tripartite Forum and the Native Courtworker Project. Unfortunately funding seems to be available for the initial development of these programs, but is very limited when it comes to actual costs of running these programs. The Native Courtworker system is crucial for aiding urban Aboriginals in their encounters with the law. It is a support system that helps urban Aboriginal people comprehend the law and how it is applied and administered. It also provides English to Mi'kmaq translation when necessary, and also provides awareness to the non-natives involved with the judicial process.

It has been found through research conducted in the Halifax urban area that urban Aboriginal people are often in contact with the police, but mostly as suspects. This should not be occurring, especially since the recent Marshall Inquiry, which found that the fact that Marshall was Aboriginal contributed to his

conviction. Court officials and police often are ignorant about Aboriginal people and tend to perceive them through their own preconceptions or misconceptions. It is this very reason why it is so important that government provide funding for Native Courtworkers, and Native officials within the judicial system. By having positions available within the present legal system for Urban Aboriginal people, we will be given the opportunity to break down the barriers which discriminate against Urban Aboriginal people. If the **Royal Commission's** mandate is to build a new relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples, than this can surely be achieved through the Native Courtworkers Program.

Urban Aboriginal offenders' problem with the Canadian Justice system does not only exist within the courts, but also within the Federal and Provincial Correctional systems too. Aboriginal people have a differing perception than the dominant society of the judicial system. Aboriginal people have different values and unique perceptions about their own healing. It often consists of one coming to accept their own spirituality, through which they often require guidance and support from Aboriginal elders. Currently, in the Halifax area there are no elders available to fulfil this need and without these necessary services, Urban Aboriginal offenders are still struggling within a system that does not meet their Aboriginal needs. If the Canadian Government is sincere in their effort to better the lives of Urban Aboriginal people, than they must set a mandate for providing funding so that these programs may be developed. In this way the staggering odds of an Aboriginal going to jail instead of university may be decreased.



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## Social Issues

### Substance Abuse

Within the urban area aboriginal people are confronted with many issues that are also common in the reserve situation. Alcohol and drug abuse has thrived within Aboriginal communities for years and has resulted in the creation of many alcohol and drug abuse treatment centres. Currently, there are two Aboriginal treatment centres located on the reserves in Nova Scotia, but there are no Aboriginal run facilities available in the urban area. Many urban Aboriginal people who wish to go to the Aboriginal treatment centre often are unable to because they lack Indian status under the Indian Act. This situation forces many urban Aboriginals to attend non-native detox centres, where they are often put on a long waiting list. It almost seems that Urban Aboriginals are given less priority because they do not reside on the reserves or because they are not Indian Act Aboriginal people. It is unfair also that urban Aboriginals should be forced to leave their community and return back to the reserve just to receive proper treatment. These same services should be available to the urban Aboriginal population, for they are still Aboriginal and still require the same humanistic needs. What is needed in the urban Aboriginal community is a Aboriginal detox centre that is similar to those found on the reserves. The non-Aboriginal treatment centres that presently exist in the urban community are fine for the treatment of alcohol abuse; but many Aboriginal people require serious emotional and spiritual healing. Alcohol abuse in the Aboriginal community is

often the result of Aboriginal peoples poor socio-economic status as well as detrimental issues of physical and sexual abuse. These issues have been a component of Aboriginal life that has surfaced after the advent of the residential school system. Alcoholism and drug abuse will continue to thrive within the Urban Aboriginal community until there is a service available that will properly address the special needs of Aboriginal people in the process of healing.

### Childcare

Urban Aboriginal women are also limited by the services that they can access due to their primary role as a caregiver. These women are often single parents and sole provider of the family. They do not have the same support systems that exist in Aboriginal reserve communities, those support systems being extended family members. This leaves urban Aboriginal women in a situation where they have difficulty sustaining employment because they lack appropriate caregivers. There are day-care programs available in the Halifax area, but all have long waiting lists for access to the seats available. Also to note is that the majority of these day-care facilities operate on a nine to five schedule, which is often not suitable for women who have a different work schedule.

Women who want to receive treatment for their addictions often cannot attend the treatment centres because there are no facilities available for their children. Their limited financial situation often leaves them with little resources

to obtain a caregiver during their stay at the treatment centre. This causes many Aboriginal women to become discouraged and thus continue with their addictions. This abuse often creates medical problems for children of abusers, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. These children are then raised in an urban community that has very little awareness about their situation, and even less services available to them.

It is due to this lack of adequate day care services that the *Micmac Native Friendship Centre* has begun developing a Mi'kmaq Child Development project that will provide services to the urban Aboriginal parent and their children. This program will provide child care on a 24-hour, seven day per week schedule, so that flexibility of work hours will be accessible to the Aboriginal parent. This program will rely on various qualified urban Aboriginals to teach pre-school cultural issues and Mi'kmaq language, and in the process building self-esteem and a positive self-image for the Mi'kmaq child. The development of the program is on-going, but problems are being foreseen in areas of operational costs. Subsidized funding is available but may take up to five years to obtain. What is needed presently is that the Federal Government and various other Multi-Cultural associations must take a serious look at the program, and to make a commitment.

Far too long we have seen the needs of the urban Aboriginal population ignored, so it is vital that the **Royal Commission** follows through with their

mandate and provide a voice for the Aboriginal Populations in Canada, including the urban population. How can we expect a better relationship to exist in the urban areas between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people if services that are provided for one are not provided for both. It has long been argued that Aboriginal people have a right to self-determination and the right to control the lives of themselves and their peoples. With the dedication of the urban Aboriginal people and the financial support by the Federal Government this goal will be more attainable with full implementation of the Mi'kmaq Child Development Project.

### Education

Within the urban Aboriginal communities there are Aboriginal people who have been subjugated to many different experiences, that has to some degree, affected their personal development. This includes past educational systems, such as Federal, Provincial, and Residential Schools, which have been racist and eroded their self-esteem, pride and dignity. The *Micmac Native Learning Centre*, an educational institution located at the *Micmac Native Friendship Centre*, has often had to deal with these issues that are found among their clientele. What has surfaced is that due to culturally ignorant institutions, many urban Aboriginals carry around with them a label of ignorance. When these individuals seek enrolment in a non-Aboriginal school the admissions test is geared towards the non-Aboriginal majority which frequently results in

Aboriginals failing to meet admissions regulations. This practice is restricting Urban Aboriginal people from obtaining their upgrading and acts to confine them to a hopeless situation. The aptitude tests, such as the C.A.A.T., must be re-analyzed and structured so that they can better provide an adequate evaluation of an urban Aboriginal person.

Urban Aboriginals who try to become educated must also face barriers created by their political leaders and chiefs. Many educational institutions are off-reserve and when attending these institutions, many Aboriginal people do not receive the support that they require from their leaders back home. It appears as if the political leaders do not view education as a priority, but yet when negotiating self-government they must recognize it's importance. Urban Aboriginal people must be provided the financial support they need, regardless of where they are located, and until they do just this we will continue to see a minimal amount of educated role models in our Aboriginal communities.

Health Concerns: Spiritual & Physical

One issue that received some attention in the Overview of Round Two discussions was the youth and the problems they saw within their various communities. It should be recognized by the **Royal Commission** that it is the youth of today that will be undertaking the issues that will be presented to the **Royal Commission**. These issues include topics that Aboriginal communities

have been attempting to deal with for many years, and also new problems that require the immediate attention of all aboriginal leaders.

A.I.D.S. is a health issue that is a reality in our Aboriginal communities and ignorance about A.I.D.S. has caused unwanted and preventable fear. Lack of educational programs on A.I.D.S. has only added to this fear. The result has been that many Aboriginal people with A.I.D.S. are being shunned by their communities, but this obstacle can be overcome, if necessary programs are established. This would include programs that would see to the care of Aboriginals with A.I.D.S. by well trained Aboriginal personnel, as well as providing affordable and adequate housing for them in the urban setting. These could come in the form of hospices located near hospitals for easier travel and medical treatment.

The medical institutions themselves need to improve their perception and legislation concerning Traditional Aboriginal treatment and incorporate these healing and treatment programs into their various institutions, regardless of the assumptions they have about their usefulness. Aboriginal peoples should be allowed the freedom to apply their own methods of healing, and Aboriginal people with A.I.D.S. should be given access to the type of healing and treatment they desire. If an Aboriginal person desires a sweetgrass ceremony or a smudge during their last hours, than the hospital personnel should not stand in the way.

Present health legislation that caters to the needs of Aboriginals needs to be re-assessed, allowing for financial support to Aboriginal people with A.I.D.S. This could be urban transportation, urban housing, or some form of networking and communication between various Aboriginal communities. Regardless of what the whole issue of A.I.D.S. involves, the Federal Government and Aboriginal leaders must realize that it is not going to simply disappear. To ignore the whole health issue of A.I.D.S. in the Aboriginal community can only be detrimental to all peoples in this country.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the hearings that have been held at the various Friendship Centres, the **Royal Commission** has heard from many urban Aboriginal peoples. They have presented to the commission the problems they face everyday, not only as an individual, but also as a collective group. The **Royal Commission** had given their utmost attention and validation to the work and effort performed by the Friendship Centres and it was assumed that their voice was being heard. Unfortunately, that does not now seem to be the case for there is currently very little viable communication occurring between the Royal commission and the Friendship Centres. On Nov. 24th., 1992, the **Royal Commission** and the **National Association of Friendship Centres** attended a meeting where M. Dussault and Mr. Erasmus had promised the establishment

of a liaison process between the two groups. They had indicated that the Friendship Centres would be involved in this process so that the Friendship Centre could help to provide some Information and solutions on the mandate of the urban population. Since that time, however, efforts on the part of the National Association of the Friendship Centres has resulted in a less than positive response. The **Royal Commission** has never initiated any communication since November 24th., 1992. This indicates that the **Royal Commission** views the Friendship Centres as insignificant players in the politically charged context of Aboriginal affairs.

Furthermore, since the establishment of the "Intervenor Project" in conjunction with the *Micmac Native Friendship Centre*, the **Royal Commission** has been slow in its correspondence concerning this issue. The correspondence sought from the **Royal Commission** includes verbatim reports from the round table discussions that occurred here in November 1992, all of which should have been mailed to the *Micmac Native Friendship Centre* by at least March. Instead, during the month of May, we had to constantly badger them until the report was sent at the end of May. This can be seen as one example among many of how the **Royal Commission** conducts itself in its relationship to the Friendship Centres.

The Friendship Centres provide many services to the urban Aboriginal population, all of which have been established to provide a more equitable



opportunity to Aboriginal peoples of the cities. With the recent budget cuts that Friendship Centres receive, these services are going to be more difficult to provide, without which, the urban Aboriginal population will remain stuck in a sub-standard existence. If the **Royal Commission** is committed to the mandate of providing a real change to all Aboriginal people in this country, then they can not afford to ignore such an important and credible Aboriginal institution such as the Friendship Centre.

The *Four Touchstones* that the **Royal Commission** states are their guidelines for change are just as much a part of the urban Aboriginal communities, as they are for the rural on-reserve communities. This includes especially; "a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples," for in the urban areas, Aboriginal people are not secluded from the dominant society. Their experiences in the urban setting could provide many solutions to the obstacles that the **Royal Commission** is facing, all the while guided by the *Four Touchstones*.

It appears that the **Royal Commission** operates from the assumption that the Bill C-31 amendment to the Indian Act erased all problems relating to status and legal identity. This is definitely not the case in the urban areas, for everyday Friendship Centres face the task of providing services to Aboriginals who are not recognized under the Indian Act. Many Aboriginal people were taken from their parents and communities, raised in Residential Schools and

foster homes, which left them with little documentation of their Aboriginal identity. Others were raised on traplines and in isolated areas which never provided for their registration. These are not isolated cases but real issues that are not properly addressed by the **Royal Commission**. Their numbers are large, and the **Royal Commission** is accountable to them also.

The Indian Act has done well in confining Aboriginal people in this country, as well as limiting their accessibility to the dominant economic structures. The whole issue of on-reserve and off-reserve is one of terrible importance that the **Royal Commission** cannot afford to ignore. Time and time again, Aboriginal people who leave the boundaries of the reservation are left with no help from their communities. Unemployment runs as high as 90% on-reserve, so this often forces Aboriginal people to leave the reserve in order to obtain further education or a better socio-economic lifestyle. I do not feel that this is the proper way for Aboriginal people to function, and I know our traditional ways did not allow for the abandonment of the Aboriginal people of our community. Aboriginal people who reside in urban areas should be provided the same services that are available to them on-reserve. If solutions to the problems that plague Aboriginal people are ever going to be found, it will only be through the recognition that Aboriginal people should be treated equally, regardless of where they live.