

MANITOBA METIS FEDERATION

THE PAS REGION

**SUBMISSION TO THE
ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

I dedicate this paper to the:

**Northern Metis of The Pas Region
whose generosity, assistance, and
commitment made this effort possible.**

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FOREWORD

A grassroots study was conducted in the twenty-one communities served by The Pas Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation. The communities were categorized into different zones dependent upon their geographical location in reference to The Pas Regional Office of the Manitoba Metis Federation. The communities of Zone 1 located north of The Pas included Cormorant, Cranberry Portage, Flin Flon, Moose Lake, Sherridon, Snow Lake and Wanless. The communities of Zone 2 located south of The Pas included Baden, Barrows, Bellsite, Mafeking, National Mills, Pelican Rapids, Powell, and Red Deer Lake. The central communities of Zone 3 included Big Eddy, Easterville, Grand Rapids, The Pas, Umpherville and Young's Point. Approximately 2500 Metis people are currently recognized within the region, plus hundreds more exist, who have not yet come forward.

In my travels to and in discussion with the Metis people of The Pas Region, I heard startling similarities in their areas of concern and in the problems they faced as individuals and communities. I was exposed to a wealth of information and recommendations which Metis people believe can provide direction for the Canadian Federal Government, Provincial Governments, Metis Nation, Metis people, Metis communities, and Canadian society as a whole.

You will notice throughout the paper I have portrayed areas of concern to Metis people and their recommendations for the same. Please note, all recommendations are outlined in italics.

We thank you, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for providing a forum in which the Metis people can be represented and their voices heard. We trust our concerns and recommendations will be recognized as legitimate and addressed by the Commission, Canadian Federal Government and its provinces and Canadian Society.

In the spirit of Louis Riel,

Raymond Larock, Researcher
13 August 1993

INTRODUCTION

Frequently, the Metis have been referred to as "Canada's forgotten people" ¹ by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars in their writings and statements. The voices and concerns of the Metis are ignored by the federal government of Canada and its provincial counterparts, while the Metis people remain unaccepted by most Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians alike. However, the Metis are a unique and distinct Nation of peoples, they are the true Canadians. The Metis are a diverse Nation with their roots stemming from the peoples of Canada's First Nations and from European immigrants, who came to Canada in search of economic prosperity. The Metis helped forge Canada into the nation it is today, through their active role in the fur trade all the way to the formation of the Confederation of Canada. They are an integral part of Canada's history with a diverse heritage and history of their own, and who are recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples as defined in the Constitution of Canada. The Metis people have always been proud of their rich heritage, but have primarily considered themselves as proud Canadians first. However, as generations have passed the importance of the Metis people and the role they played in building this nation has been diminished to a point of where they are viewed as illegitimate and irrelevant by the Federal Government of Canada, its provinces, and Canadian society as a whole. It has become apparent to the Metis that the governments of Canada and its provinces are not the governments of the Metis peoples, as they do not speak for Metis people or address the concerns they have as individuals and as a nation. Being unaccepted and unrepresented in one's own homeland fosters feelings of distrust, helplessness, hopelessness, apathy, and misery. The Metis people can no longer trust or depend on the governments and society to represent

¹ Umpherville Community Meeting, 1993.

their interests and concerns, and therefore must provide their own voice and representation. This paper will portray the voice of the Northern Metis and discuss the concerns and recommendations they have offered on issues of healing, self-sufficiency, self-determination, the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and other important areas of concern such as the environment, sports and recreation, and the hardships of living in the north.

I. HEALING

As people strive to survive and to better themselves, perhaps their most valuable asset is their personal and collective health. Good health is all encompassing, it includes physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. If one component of a persons' health is lacking, the person as a whole suffers. In many areas, the health of the Northern Metis has been undermined by outside forces imposing policies in the area of health care, which leave the Metis suffering with poor health and subject to poor health care delivery.

i. Health Care Delivery

The greatest problem the Metis have in maintaining their health is in coping with the health care system itself. The health care system is insensitive to the needs of Metis people, and therefore affects Metis people in a negative manner.

When people seek medical attention, they are not given the adequate time and/or attention they deserve. For example, when people go to the doctor, they are rushed in and out of the doctor's office. They begin to state what is ailing them, and the doctor is already writing out a prescription. They are given a prescription for medication without the doctor knowing what is actually wrong with them, or

what can be done to prevent the ailment from resurfacing. These conditions create a variety of problems; first, doctors are not allowing enough time or attention to correctly diagnose peoples' conditions. Secondly, the medication given does not cure the disease, it simply hides the symptoms. Doctors are treating the symptoms rather than treating the disease. Thirdly, in many instances the people are misdiagnosed and prescribed the wrong medication, so the people do not get well and often become sicker. Finally, doctors are no longer the healers they once were, instead they have become pill pushers. They give pills for everything regardless of the illness and/or circumstances surrounding the persons' condition. For example, a male patient visited his family doctor to get assistance in combating the state of depression he was experiencing since he began abstaining from drugs and alcohol. The patient advised the doctor that he was a drug addict and an alcoholic, who must abstain from all drugs and alcohol because they were making his life unmanageable.

The doctor listened to the patient and promptly wrote out a prescription for valium, which the doctor stated would relieve his state of depression. The patient was reluctant to take the pills because he suspected that they would adversely affect his recovery from drugs and alcohol, but he trusted that the doctor knew best and began taking the medication. Within one month, the man was admitted to an addiction treatment centre seeking recovery from his addiction to valium. It was discovered later, the patient did not require medication to relieve his depression, but only needed to talk out and accept the problems he was facing in his life. It seems the doctor in this case was ignorant on matters dealing with drugs and alcohol, and yet this same doctor is administering and prescribing drugs on a daily basis. The issue

here is peoples' lives are at stake, when they are suffering from depression because they are often suicidal, homicidal, and are having trouble coping with life on life's terms.

Sadly, we put our trust and faith in a doctor, who we believe can help us and in turn, the doctor sends us on another ride on the addiction cycle. If a doctor does not know any better than to prescribe mind altering drugs to a known drug addict and alcoholic, then the doctor does not know anything about drugs or addiction and should not be allowed to practise medicine. If they (doctors) spent more thinking about what they are prescribing and who they are prescribing it to, instead of pushing pills...people would be a lot better off. Nowadays, doctors are nothing more than legalized drug dealers.²

When Metis people seek medical attention at the hospital or clinic, they are treated like second class citizens. For example, people stated that it doesn't seem to matter what time you make your appointment for because you do not get to see the doctor until the end of the day, that is, after all the non-Aboriginal people have seen the doctor first.

It doesn't matter if your appointment is at 10 a.m. or 2 p.m., you don't get in to see the doctor until just before closing time. We are not allowed to see the doctor until all the white people have seen him first. It seems like the nurses at the hospital and the clinic are prejudiced...they do not like Native people. By the time we get to see the doctor it is too late to get our prescriptions filled, so we have to

² Anonymous, 1993.

make another trip to Swan River the next day. These people do not realize that we do not live in town, we can't just run uptown anytime we want...we have to travel over an hour each way to get to town and back. The travel to Swan River is physically, emotionally, and financially draining.³

The people stated that they are verbally abused and publicly humiliated by the nurses at the hospital. The nurses shout at them and call them down for coming late or not calling ahead, and often accuse them of abusing the system. Metis people, and Aboriginal people in general, are shamed and made to feel second class when they access medical services. The doctors and nurses fail to realize most Metis people have to travel great distances to seek medical attention and often do not have access to vehicles. Many people feel the only reason why they are treated in a negative manner, is due to the fact, they are of Aboriginal ancestry.

Some people are suspicious that the pharmacies are "ripping them off"⁴ when they get their prescriptions. People suspect they are receiving generic drugs and being charged for brand name labelled drugs, because the pharmacist assumes the difference will not be noticed. People stated upon comparing prescriptions with others, they found the pills to differ in size, colour, shape, and brand name, yet the price on both were the same. One woman stated, "The pharmacist thinks he can give us whatever he wants and we will be too stupid to know the difference. He is ripping us off by charging us full price for generic drugs."⁵

³ Red Deer Lake Community Meeting, 1993.

⁴ Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

⁵ Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

Many Metis communities lack the medical facilities and services for Metis people to access. Within The Pas Region, the only communities with adequate medical facilities are the communities of The Pas and Flin Flon. The communities of Snow Lake, Sherridon, Pelican Rapids, Cormorant, Grand Rapids, Easterville, and Moose Lake have nursing stations, however the stations cannot adequately service peoples' medical needs. The nursing stations are basically a referral service, as most of the medical cases must be referred to The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, or Swan River. The nursing stations are not equipped to deal with most injuries or sicknesses, and the nurses on staff are not licensed to administer medication and/or perform operations of any kind. Although the nursing stations are welcomed and utilized by the people in the communities, the stations are not providing the level of service people need and/or want. The remaining twelve (12) communities of Baden, Barrows, Bellsite, Mafeking, National Mills, Powell, Red Deer Lake, Wanless, Big Eddy, Umpherville, Cranberry Portage and Young's Point within The Pas Region are without medical service and facilities in their communities. The people in these communities must seek all their medical attention from outside their home communities. As you can imagine, travelling between one's home and outside communities to access medical services and enduring long waits when one arrives, soon becomes physically, emotionally, mentally, and financially exhausting.

The Northern Metis are especially concerned by the Manitoba governments' decision to cut back health service. Metis people and communities already suffer from poor and inadequate medical services, so cutting services can only make

matters worse. Although the government may be saving money through its health reform package, hospitals and the people they serve are being affected in a very negative manner. Morale among hospital staff is low, due to cutbacks in staff and patients/outpatients are being subjected to poor service. My four year old nephew received a severe head wound after being struck by a heavy, glass ornament. He was bleeding badly, so I took him into the hospital in The Pas. When we got there the nurses would not lift a finger to help him...they made me carry him into a room and told me to compress the wound with bandages to stop the bleeding. They would not even look at him to see how badly he was hurt. I told them I was scared to put pressure on the wound, in case there were fragments of glass inside, but they would not listen to me. The nurse left the room and my nephew and I were left to fend for ourselves. I left the room momentarily on a number of occasions to ask for more bandages, as he was bleeding so bad. Each time, I found three nurses sitting around the outpatients desk doing nothing...I asked them to help me but none of them moved. This went on for 30 minutes and noticed my nephew was turning blue and shivering from all the blood he had lost. I stormed out of the room and starting freaking out on the nurses...I told them if they didn't get there I was going to sue them if something happened to my nephew. Two of the nurses immediately starting helping him, meanwhile the other turned to me and said, "the government calls it health reform, we call it health deform."⁶ The problem with all of this is that the human factor has been lost...no one cares about people anymore. The

⁶ Unidentified registered nurse, 1993.

government only cares about saving money, and the nurses and doctors only care about their jobs and wages. How many people are going to have to die before something is done?⁷

The Metis are very concerned about the user fee being charged for people to access medical service via ambulance and air ambulance. Although many people can afford to pay the \$50.00 user fee, those people on social assistance, pensions, and fixed incomes cannot afford to pay \$50.00 for medical transportation. People on low incomes and/or fixed incomes are being disqualified from receiving medical attention they require, being unable to afford the user fee. As a result of being unable to afford user fees, people are neglecting their health to save money.

A pensioner from Cranberry Portage outlined the negative effects of the user fee in stating, "The government cannot expect people on low incomes to pay user fees to go to the hospital, when they are sick. The people on pensions and welfare can barely afford to feed, clothe, and provide shelter for themselves, never mind, pay extra user fees...people just don't have the money. User fees do not help anyone, they only help the government save money at the expense of peoples' health. The government is charging us money to go to the hospital and now I hear the hospitals want to charge user fees to use the outpatients service. Pretty soon, only the rich will be able to use hospital services, because the rest of us will not be able to afford it. It is really sad because the people who need the service the most cannot afford it, so they end up neglecting their health. No one should neglect their

⁷ The Pas Meeting, 1993.

health, because not only does it affect the sick people negatively, but it sets a bad example for their children, who are learning from their parents.⁸

As citizens of Canada and the province of Manitoba, the Northern Metis have the right to access health care service as required. The Metis have the right to be treated in a fair and just manner, while seeking medical attention. Being of Aboriginal ancestry does not disqualify ones' need for consistent, efficient, effective and courteous treatment.

Health care professionals need sensitivity training to allow them to view and treat Metis people as equals...the Metis hurt and bleed just like everyone else. Health professionals must realize Metis people are not abusing the system, but only seeking to have their needs met. Non-Aboriginal doctors and nurses have to stop blaming the victim...they need to recognize and acknowledge the hardships Metis people face and how it contributes to poor health. For example, poor living conditions, lack of water and sewage, lack of nearby medical facilities, financial difficulties, racism and discrimination within health care system, etc. Doctors and nurses need to make time to communicate with and show compassion to Metis people, so they can understand and help Metis people.

The Metis recommend doctors return to the traditional role of healer and end their pill pushing ways. Doctors must understand most pills do not cure people, but merely hide the symptoms of disease. The Metis people agree drugs may be necessary in emergency or life threatening situations, but not for medical check-ups ,

⁸ Cranberry Portage Community Meeting, 1993.

doctor visits, or people with addiction problems. Instead of pushing pills, doctors need to promote proactive action, such as eating healthy, getting exercise, and changing ones lifestyle and/or environment.

The Northern Metis recommend the Canadian government develop an approach to health care similar to those being utilized in parts of the United States and Europe. The people stated in these areas if a one became sick, one would visit a medical analyst, who would diagnose ones' condition and provide referral to a dietitian, surgeon, counsellor, psychiatrist, doctor, addiction treatment centre, etc. People feel this system would provide a variety of benefits: first, the government would save money on doctors fees since not all patients would necessarily have to see a doctor. Secondly, the aforementioned professionals already exist within the structures of most health care institutions and/or government agencies. Thirdly, a person would only receive medication as a last resort, as they would only receive drugs if genuinely needed. Finally, if the governments and hospitals were saving money, while providing adequate care, user fees would be unnecessary. This model of health care delivery has been successful in parts of the United States and Europe, as the governments and hospitals are providing effective low cost health care which saves taxpayers money and meets the needs of clients. The Metis people believe all Canadians would benefit if the aforementioned model of health care was adopted in Canada.

The Northern Metis are insisting the government provide prevention programs and health care services to all the Metis communities of The Pas Region. As mentioned earlier, of the twenty one (21) communities in The Pas Region only

the seven (7) communities of Pelican Rapids, Cormorant, Moose Lake, Sherridon, Snow Lake, Easterville, and Grand Rapids have nursing stations, while the communities of The Pas and Flin Flon have hospitals. To date, most medical service must be sought from hospitals in the larger centres of The Pas, Swan River, Thompson, and Flin Flon, as the nursing stations do not have the equipment or trained staff to deal with the task at hand or no medical services exist in the community. The people stated a nursing station is needed in Barrows to serve the communities of Barrows, Baden, National Mills, Powell, and Red Deer Lake with adequate and nearby medical service. Nursing stations are also needed in the communities of Wanless, Cranberry Portage, and Mafeking to serve local people and those in nearby communities. The government must understand the people need easily accessible medical service, as most do not have the finances, strength, or transportation to travel extensive distances.

Nursing stations can be an essential link in promoting and maintaining good health in remote Manitoban communities, if properly equipped and staffed. People stated nursing stations have to be more than a referral service, they need to have doctors on a full time or bi-weekly basis, full time nurses, sufficient and appropriate medication, and the necessary equipment to treat people requiring help. Metis people do not believe they should have to leave their community every time they get sick. Proper medical treatment and resources should be available within their home communities.

ii. Social Services

People receiving social assistance cannot access medical services without

the consent of their social worker. People must phone or visit their social worker at least two (2) days in advance, if their medical trip expenses are to be reimbursed. Most people on social assistance cannot afford to pay for trips to the doctor, due to financial restraints and therefore must conform to the rules set down by their social worker

Social services will not give us assistance for medical expenses, unless we phone them two days in advance. But how can you phone in advance if an emergency arises and you must go to the hospital immediately. They (social workers) do not consider that people cannot plan when they are going to get sick...if you get sick, you are sick, there is no two ways around it. They also do not consider that their offices are not open in the evenings or on weekends...you can only phone during the working hours on weekdays. The white people that work in the social services department are not sensitive to issues facing the Metis people, plus they do not trust Native people. These mannerisms affect the Metis negatively, in that, people are neglecting their health because they cannot afford to go to the doctor or the hospital on their own and social services will not support them.⁹

Social assistance recipients are concerned about receiving less monies for travel from social services if they travel in the afternoon, rather than in the morning.

People cannot make any sense out of this policy, a person should receive the same monies since the distance remains the same whether you travel it in the morning or

⁹Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

the afternoon.

The Northern Metis believe all government workers who interact with Metis peoples should be sensitized to Aboriginal peoples and the difficulties they face in today's society. Most government officials/workers are well educated, however they are lacking in areas of sensitivity to Metis people. All institutionalized and personal prejudices must be extinguished, if government workers are to meet the needs of Metis people. The stereotypes of Metis and Aboriginal people must be broken down, so Metis and Aboriginal people are not assumed to all be "lazy, drunken Indians."¹⁰ As one person stated, "The governments and their employees cannot tar us all with the same brush...if it were not for us they would have no jobs or pay cheques. They are there to serve us, not judge us."¹¹ The Social Services department policy of assisting only those in with medical needs, who provide two (2) days notice to their social worker requires immediate amendment. The department has to recognize their hours of operation do not always allow for two (2) days notice to be given and to consider the factors of emergency, people are often forced to face. The people feel perhaps a local contact person in the community could be utilized or confirmation could be sought from the doctor or hospital to clarify need. People understand the policy of giving notice is to prevent abuse, but abuse is rare as most people are really sick. Social services must stop believing everyone is out to abuse the system and accept the fact, people actually get sick/hurt without warning and require immediate medical attention.

¹⁰ Anonymous, 1993.

¹¹ Cranberry Portage Community Meeting, 1993.

Many people commented on the alarming number of people, including Metis people, who are abusing the system within the department of Social Services, but many feel the problem was created by the department itself. People believe the welfare department must change its policies to prevent abuse from taking place, since people who are abusing the system are not going to change.

For example, it was stated, “They (Social Services) have let welfare get way out of hand. People do not even try to work, they just try to get as much out of welfare as they can. Welfare recipients should have to earn their money, just like everyone else. If people had to work, they would get out and find themselves a real job...and even if they didn't, at least welfare and the communities would receive the benefits from work being done in their community.”¹²

The Metis feel only elderly and disabled persons should be excluded from working, if the quoted suggestion was adopted by the welfare department.

Metis people feel the welfare department should utilize existing community based resources and other governmental departments to assist welfare recipients struggling with alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling addiction, etc. Although identifying personal problems would be difficult, the practise would be beneficial if it helped people recover from addictions. If addictions among recipients of social assistance were arrested, perhaps all monies would be spent on the necessities for living as prescribed by the welfare department.

People feel the welfare department needs to acquire consistency in

¹² Grand Rapids Meeting, 1993.

allotments of travel monies. People cannot understand why a difference exists in the amount of monies paid for travel, depending upon whether the person seeks medical attention in the morning or afternoon. Whether one travels in the morning or the afternoon, the distance always remains the same, therefore one should be allotted the same amount of monies for each.

iii. Lifestyles

Although Metis people feel overpowered by outside forces in seeking proper medical attention, many difficulties in one's health stems from the people themselves. People are taking the modern conveniences of life for granted, by not taking proper care of themselves as they should.

People are getting lazy, they do not walk anymore or get the exercise they should. Instead of walking, people jump in their cars and drive everywhere, even if it just down the street. People are not eating properly, they only eat canned foods and foods from the store, which are unhealthy and full of preservatives. People would be in a lot better shape, if they got more exercise and ate healthier foods. In the past, we didn't have cars, we used to walk everywhere and we were in a lot better shape then. Plus, we didn't eat the white mans' canned foods and junk food that our people are eating nowadays...we ate wild meat and natural foods from the earth. Nowadays, the food people eat is not fit for dogs to eat, it is full of preservatives, herbicides, and other garbage that only makes you sick. I can guarantee that if people returned to eating traditional foods, rather than store bought foods they would be in a lot better health. You see, when you hunt and gather food, not only do you get healthy food, but you also get exercise and just being out in nature makes a

person feel good about themselves.¹³

Many Metis people are troubled by the fact traditional "Indian medicine"¹⁴ can no longer be utilized to heal themselves, as much as this art has been lost. The people firmly believe the traditional methods of healing were more effective than taking pills or going to the doctor. However, much of the traditional knowledge has not been passed down from the elders to the next generation. Generally, very few Metis people have the skills to gather and prepare traditional medicines in the proper manner. Be it understood, the matter does not rest solely on the shoulders of the elders, but in the fact, most Metis people were forced to assimilate into the predominant White culture through schooling and outside pressures. An integral aspect of the Metis way of life was learning traditional practises and wisdom from the elders, but with an assimilatory way of life being forced on Metis people, traditional ways of life were forced to the verge of extinction.

Non-Aboriginal attempts to assimilate Metis people, required the Metis to reject and denounce their identity as Metis people, their culture and heritage, and dramatically changed the Metis way of life. Assimilation forced the Metis people to become "the white man's Indian"¹⁵, since, they were not allowed to be themselves.

Metis people have to be responsible for maintaining their own health, people

¹³ Powell Meeting, 1993.

¹⁴ Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

¹⁵ Moose Lake Meeting, 1993.

must eat properly, get sufficient rest, exercise and avoid unhealthy lifestyles. The Metis who have maintained traditional eating practises, such as eating wild meat and game birds, seem to be in better health, than those who only consume store bought foods. The people recommended all Metis people return to eating traditional foods and avoid the canned and packaged foods from groceries stores.

The Metis expressed a need to revitalize "Indian medicine"¹⁶ within the Metis culture. Traditional Metis knowledge can only be learned through demonstration and oral translation, therefore, individuals must seek the Metis elders to learn the traditional practices and values which have been lost. People cannot depend on doctors in hospitals to heal them, so returning to the practise of using traditional medicine would be beneficial. The Metis believe "Indian medicine"¹⁷ to be very powerful since it uses elements of nature and spiritually, which are present in all peoples. People view the "white man's medicine"¹⁸ as being primarily derived from chemicals and artificial ingredients.

In addition, people stated the assimilation process forced Metis people to deny themselves as Metis people. Assimilation affected Metis people in a negative manner in that, they lost their spirit, identity and meaning in life which eventually filled their bodies and minds with "dis-ease".¹⁹ The Metis people believe they

¹⁶Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

¹⁷Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The Pas Meeting, 1993.

must reacquire the elements of their traditional culture which have been lost. The people believe healing oneself is possible, through the practises and beliefs of their traditional culture. In revitalizing the lost elements of culture, language, values and beliefs, the Metis hope to heal their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wounds.

iv. Addictions

The Northern Metis are very concerned about the number of Metis people who are using drugs, alcohol and gambling in a negative manner. The people who are addicted to these substances and activities are not only jeopardizing their own health, but also the health of their family members.

People are spending their entire cheques in one day or in a weekend on alcohol, drugs, bingo, or VLT's (video lottery terminals)...they get paid on Friday and by Monday they are broke again. They don't buy no groceries or clothes for themselves or their kids. If other people in the community did not feed the kids and look after them, they would starve to death, because the parents cannot even help themselves, never mind their kids.²⁰

In addition, people commented on the events and circumstances which lead many people to become addicted to alcohol, drugs, and gambling. One woman stated, "It was fun in the beginning, but then I started having problems...so I drank more. Drinking helped me forget my problems. I knew I was hurting my kids, but I couldn't stop."²¹

²⁰ Bellsite Meeting, 1993.

²¹ Anonymous, 1993.

A Metis elder also added, "A lot of my people have problems with drinking because they have been hurt badly. My people have endured many wrongs that were done to us by the white man. We have been robbed of our land, our spirit, and our dignity...people do not know where they belong or how they should feel. People are hurting inside, so they drink to kill the pain. Drinking doesn't fix people, it only makes things worse. People have to stop drinking...they have to get help, so they can help themselves because no one can make them stop but themselves. All I can do is talk to them, if they will listen and pray for them."²²

Addictions are the symptoms of the "dis-ease"²³ which manifests itself in a large number of Metis people. The "dis-ease"²⁴ stems from the injustices which have been forced on the Metis people throughout the generations. People are using alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc. to get out of themselves, since to face their problems seem too painful and overwhelming. The Metis people recognize it is the responsibility of the addict/alcoholic to recover from what is ailing them, as no one can do it for them.

A recovering alcoholic from Cranberry Portage summarized the nature of addicts in her statement, "Although people may not be responsible for what happened to them that started them drinking, it is up to do something about it if they want to get better.

²² Pelican Rapids Meeting, 1993.

²³ The Pas Meeting, 1993.

²⁴ Ibid

These people do not have a moral deficiency...they are sick, but they can recover if they want it bad enough. They made the choice to start drinking, so they have to take responsibility to do whatever it takes to get better. No one can make an alcoholic stop drinking, they have to want it for themselves and being willing to make the effort to get it. I can tell you it isn't easy, but it is worth it.”²⁵

The Metis recommend treatment centres for addictions be built in Metis communities to help the alcoholic, drug addict and gambling addict recover from their disease(s). People with addictions need direction, support, and rehabilitation, to live healthy, normal lives. The Northern Metis require more addiction centres within The Pas region, as to date, the only service available is Rosaire House in The Pas, which is always full of northern Manitobans. The people request the establishment of addiction centres in the communities of Easterville to better serve the north and central areas, and in Barrows or Mafeking to serve the southern area of The Pas Region.

The Northern Metis feel more facilities and resources must be made accessible to combat and extinguish the diseases of addiction among the Metis and all peoples of The Pas Region.

The Northern Metis recommend people with drinking problems, drug addiction, and gambling addictions to seek assistance from twelve (12) step self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Gamblers Anonymous. Many people stated they received the help needed from

²⁵ Anonymous, 1993.

self-help groups to overcome their drinking, drug, and/or gambling addictions.

II. SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The instinct to survive is inherent to all peoples, but mere survival must be complimented with the right to flourish and prosper as collectives and individuals. Historically, Metis people had mastered the ability to become and remain self-sufficient through their dependency on the environment and employment in the workforce. But for many, forced assimilation, poor job markets, discriminatory hiring practises, and an unstable economy soon shifted their dependency to one of government assistance.

i. Local Markets

Most Metis communities excluding The Pas, Flin Flon, and Snow Lake lack the businesses and services necessary to generate employment and stability. Although, some communities have small grocery, corner, and general stores, the price of goods in these establishments is too expensive, for people to afford. Metis people choose to shop for necessities outside of their home communities, in order to get their moneys' worth. With no jobs in the community and the majority of purchases being made outside the community, the community never grows or acquires the finances and ability to rebuild itself.

You can't afford to shop in town, because everything is too expensive...we only buy in town if we need something like bread or milk. We have to shop out of town because we can get better deals and more for our money. What this community needs is for the businesses to be competitive with the shops in Swan River, if they were all the people in this area would shop here. I would prefer to

shop in town, because I would like to see the money in this town, get spent in this town. If we spent our money at local stores, the owners can put money back into the community...and maybe this community could be a better place to live. But the way it is, everyone is just trying to survive with the little each has.²⁶

The problem illustrated in the above example is threefold: firstly, most Metis communities lack the business and service people require, secondly, prices in their home communities are too expensive for most Metis people to afford and finally, people have become accustomed to travelling outside their community to have their shopping needs met, since a variety of choices, competitive prices, and convenience (excluding travel) exist in the larger centres.

The Northern Metis recommend local stores in their communities increase their inventories and adopt competitive pricing practises to meet the demands and needs of the people. The Metis people would like to see larger grocery and dry goods stores such as I.G.A., Northern Stores (The Bay), Co-op, etc. established in the communities of Cormorant, Barrows or Mafeking, and Moose Lake to meet the needs of the people.

The recommendation to shop locally in ones' home town to support ones' local economy is recognized and supported by all Northern Metis.

ii. Government Grants/Loans

Within The Pas Region, practically no businesses and/or services are owned and/or operated by Metis people with the exception of those who

²⁶ Mafeking Meeting, 1993.

manufacture traditional handicrafts, fish commercially, provide guiding services, or own small businesses. Most Metis people lack the skills and/or finances to establish businesses/services on their own. The Metis are primarily dependent on non-Metis employers outside their communities for jobs or on the government for unemployment benefits or social assistance. To date, the instability of the Canadian economy has created massive unemployment across the country from which the Metis have not been excluded. Most Metis communities lack the businesses and services to meet the needs of local and surrounding townspeople. Many Metis have sought to access government grants and loans to create business opportunities in their communities, but have been met with very limited success.

Metis people feel they are being excluded from receiving government grants and/or loans, simply due to the fact they are of Aboriginal ancestry. Government workers are showing discrimination towards Metis people by not supplying applications, background information, deadline for submissions, and other pertinent information or by deceiving people with false information.

I was interested in starting up a vehicle and small engine repair shop, so when I seen a poster advertising that government money was available to start private business, I went to apply right away. When I got to the office, the woman there just gave me the runaround, first, she said there was no such program, then there was no applications, and then she says it won't matter if they had applications or not because there is no funding available. I was telling my friend (non-Aboriginal) about what happened, and we decided that he would try to succeed where I had failed. He walked into the office and within ten minutes he came out

with an application form and a guide for application. When I went back in to ask her why she wouldn't give me an application, but would give one to someone else, she just ignored me and walked to the back part of the office until I left. She thought I was so stupid that she could tell me anything she wanted and I would believe her. This is just one example of what is like to deal with these people.²⁷

It is clear many government workers show prejudice towards Metis people, by failing to provide people with the essential forms and information needed to access government assistance. Most Metis people are seeking to overcome the negative circumstances faced in their communities and lives, but when the government and its employees refuse to be of assistance, the problem is only compounded. The Metis believe the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of government workers are manifestations of institutionalized racism within the government as a whole.

To successfully attain government grants and/or loans to start or maintain a business, one is required to produce ones' own monies to equal a certain percentage of the requested sum. For example, if a person wanted to borrow \$50,000.00 to start a small business, they would be required to invest \$5,000.00 (approximately 10%, subject to variance) of their own monies. The Metis people I heard in my travels have a wide range of excellent ideas, one could use to satisfy ones' own personal finance needs, as well as create employment opportunities for others. The problem with physical reality out of creative ideas into reality is the fact most Metis

²⁷ Cormorant Meeting, 1993.

people do not have the amount of monies needed to satisfy the terms of the government grants/loans and therefore, are considered ineligible. A person with full time employment may not have trouble generating the \$5,000.00 illustrated in the aforementioned example, but a person receiving unemployment insurance (UIC) or social assistance would have to save 6 - 12 months worth of benefits to save \$5,000.00. Anyone who has received UIC or social assistance knows saving \$5,000.00 is virtually impossible, since one only receives sufficient monies to last for the month in which it is granted.

The government and its employees must become sensitive to the struggles Metis people face in attempting to acquire employment and financial stability for themselves. Many Metis people could have successful businesses and provide employment for others in their communities, if they were given the time and attention required to access government funding. Government workers must treat Metis people with honesty and helpfulness, they must not assume applicants of Aboriginal ancestry will never amount to anything. Metis people desperately want to better themselves but often require financial, personal and/or professional assistance. Government employees can take an active role in ensuring the success of Metis endeavours by providing professional recommendations and assistance. Government employees have a responsibility to deliver information and assistance on government funding, just as applicants have a responsibility to meet the requirements of the funding source.

The Northern Metis recommend deletion of the policy requiring applicants seeking government funding to provide a percentage of monies requested.

Metis people are willing to invest their own monies to generate viable businesses opportunities in their communities, however most people do not have the finances to support such action. The people believe their business ventures would be successful, however they cannot meet the criteria specified by the government. Therefore, it is also recommended the government base its criteria of selection on areas other than ones ability to provide financial investment into the business venture.

iii. Unemployability

The lack of industry and employment opportunities in most Metis communities negates most opportunities for Metis people to seek and attain employment in their home communities. Most Metis communities in The Pas Region were erected around forestry and mining companies, however, the companies often no longer exist due to the lack of natural resources and monies to support major operations. Initially, most Metis people living in the area were supported through employment with the companies, but when the companies left, the jobs disappeared. Although the companies are no more, Metis people still remain, despite the struggles to survive. To date, all employment opportunities must be sought outside the home communities of the Metis, since no jobs are available in the community. The Metis people are being negatively affected by the governments' decision to "sell out"²⁸ the forests in Manitoba to Repap (an Eastern Canada based pulp and paper company). The people stated, "We can't even cut

²⁸ National Mills Meeting, 1993.

trees for firewood because Repap owns all the forest...the government sold them all the forest rights. Repap comes in here, cuts down all the trees destroys our environment and the government supports them. They will not hire any local people, instead they bring in all their own workers and equipment. Many of us have our own equipment, plus we are experienced at working in the bush, but they will not hire us. Repap is reaping the benefits of our natural resources and we get nothing. It's a shame because soon all the trees will be cut, our mountain will look like hell, and we'll be left to live in and clean up the mess.”²⁹

The people feel the resources exist to support viable logging and lumber businesses in many areas, however, difficulties, as outlined earlier, exist in accessing government funding to support their ideas.

Metis people are excluded from receiving the benefits of employment in both, their home communities and outside communities due to prejudicial attitudes and behaviours of many employers. Many non-Aboriginal employers have internalized negative stereotypical images of Native people and will not hire any person they suspect may be of Aboriginal ancestry. With Metis people being subjected to racial and discriminatory treatment while seeking employment, one can understand why many Metis people are forced to become dependent on government assistance. Receiving government assistance is not a matter of choice for many Metis people, but a matter of life or death.

Racial prejudice among non-Aboriginal employers must be extinguished to

²⁹ Ibid

allow Metis people equal access to employment opportunities. The Metis recognize employment opportunities in Metis communities must be created by Metis people, however, financial difficulties must be overcome. The Northern Metis are recommending the government provide special consideration to Metis individuals and businesses in their requests for financial and professional assistance.

The people believe self-sufficiency is possible if initial government support is provided to the Metis, as is provided to industrial corporations who request government assistance. The Metis are recommending more government assistance on the individual and community level, as is granted on the corporate level.

iv. Education

Formal education and training for Metis people are highly recommended, considering the instability of the Canadian economy and the lack of employment in most Metis communities. The Northern Metis recommend the establishment of university education and professional trades facilities in the north. The Northern Metis believe self-sufficiency is dependent upon the acquisition of university education and formal trades training. Formal education and training will provide one with the needed skills and abilities to successfully operate businesses/services and/or qualify for employment opportunities. The people recommend trade schools be established in Mafeking or Barrows and Grand Rapids to compliment existing facilities in The Pas. People believe the fulfilment of peoples' educational needs in northern Manitoba, requires the establishment of a university in the north.

III. SELF DETERMINATION

The Metis people should not be subject to non-Metis judgements and

direction, as the Metis know what is best for Metis people. All people, including the Metis have the right to determine and control their individual and collective futures.

i. Self-Government

The majority of the Metis people I heard were unclear as to what self-government for Metis would encompass. On numerous occasions, people stated variations of the following statement: Most people do not know what self-government is, it has to clearly defined. Only the negotiators know what they want, the rest of us do not understand what it is all about. We are not educated enough to have a formal government like the non-Native governments do...we do not have enough education.³⁰

Some people are afraid self-government would only benefit the few people at the top of the hierarchy, while the rest would suffer. Fears of misappropriation and mismanagement of funds, similar to circumstances occurring within some First Nations organizations exist.

Although Metis people support the concept of Metis self-government, they feel the Metis people are lacking in areas of education and training.

The Northern Metis view self-government as a viable means of controlling their futures, however more time and education are needed first. Education is essential for Metis people, as self-determination would require...the need for banks, brokers, hospitals, school, justice system, factories, investments, etc. We need to

³⁰Grand Rapids Meeting, 1993.

take control of the resources. We want to form our own environment...we want our own people working for us.³¹

In addition, people feel land claims and constitutional issues affecting the Metis need to be settled before self-government can become a reality.

The people feel self-determination should not be called self-government, as this term may be viewed as confrontational by the existing levels of government. Rather than call itself government, we could call it a co-op nation, that would be a milder term for self-determination. Give us the money and we will manage our own affairs and business. We do not need a parliamentary Whitehouse, we only want to determine our own futures. We can follow existing provincial and federal laws, if they are reasonable, if not we would have the right to amend them to suit our needs.³²

People feel Metis self-government is inevitable, however, more education and training are needed in the areas of administering, management, consultation, leadership, and other essential areas. Metis self-government must be able to provide effective solutions to the problems Metis people and communities face.

³¹ Ibid

³² Grand Rapids Meeting, 1993.

IV. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

i. Government Issues

The Northern Metis feel the federal and provincial governments of Canada ignore their voices and concerns, as Canadian citizens. People stated the governments do not recognize their concerns or representation, and basically treat the people and their concerns as illegitimate and irrelevant. The Northern Metis feel unaccepted and unrepresented by the government and do not trust the government. Basically, Metis people view the governments of Canada and Manitoba as being insensitive to the Northern Metis and therefore, not the true governments of the Northern Metis.

The Constitution of Canada defines the Indian, Inuit and Metis as Canada's Aboriginal Peoples, and lists the responsibility of the federal government in dealing with Aboriginal Peoples. The federal government recognizes and addresses the concerns of First Nations (Indians) and the Inuit, as Aboriginal Peoples, but they ignore the Metis peoples, as Aboriginal Peoples. Basically, the federal government is unwilling to recognize and address Metis peoples in a fair and just manner, despite its constitutional obligation.

Trust, honesty, sensitivity, and willingness to change are four (4) components essential to the establishment of a positive working relationship between the government and Metis peoples. Presently, existing levels of government lack the aforementioned components in their relationships with the

Northern Metis, and Metis people as a whole. The Northern Metis recommend the governments become sensitive to the hardships which have been forced upon Metis people and begin to deal with them in an open and cooperative manner. The government is largely responsible for the predicaments Metis people face so, responsibility must be assumed by the government to provide corrective action and assistance as recommended by the Metis.

The Northern Metis recommend the government fulfil its legal responsibility to Aboriginal Peoples in an honest and effective manner. Aboriginal Peoples should not have to take the government to court everytime an Aboriginal issue needs resolved. The people stated, "If the government spent the same money trying to help Aboriginal Peoples as they do fighting us in the courts, everyone would be a lot better off."³³

The federal government of Canada has a constitutional obligation to Metis people, as Aboriginal Peoples, therefore the Metis people recommend that the Metis be granted the same rights, privileges and funding as shown to Indian and Inuit peoples.

ii. Racism and Discrimination

Most Northern Metis have been subjected to racist attitudes and behaviours in interactions with the dominant non-Aboriginal society. Examples of discriminatory behaviours towards the Northern Metis have been outlined in previous sections of this paper. The dominant non-Aboriginal society primarily

³³ Sherridon Meeting, 1993.

views Metis people as illegitimate, second class peoples, who are unworthy of fair and equal treatment. All peoples, regardless of racial origin are abused when subjected to racial discrimination. Racial discrimination contaminates peoples' self-esteem, identity, motivation, and ambitions by making them feel unworthy and/or less than equal. Racism is based on negative stereotypes and untruths about peoples based on their skin colour and ethnic background. Racism perpetuates stereotypes and untruths to keep ethnic minorities from flourishing and gaining equality within the dominant White society. Sadly, victims of racism often internalize the prejudicial untruths by accepting them as fact and begin to blame themselves for the injustices shown them by others.

The Northern Metis recognize racism, prejudice, and discrimination as elements which have existed in Canada, since the first Europeans arrived on this continent. The first Europeans labelled Aboriginal peoples as savages, pagans, devils, etc. upon their initial contact. Racism and discrimination towards Aboriginal peoples have been passed down through generations without due regard given to the true nature of Aboriginal peoples. However, in Canada's multicultural society of today, racism and discrimination are no longer regarded as acceptable behaviour.

The Northern Metis recommend racism and discrimination be extinguished through the implementation:

1. Stricter laws dealing with racial matters, including prison terms for repeat offenders
2. Harsh sentences for racial offenders

3. Mandatory sensitivity training for racial offenders, including restitution to victims
4. The implementation of mandatory racial programs into the school curriculum
5. Implementation of special committees to deal with racial offenders and matters
6. Public awareness workshops
7. Increased affirmative action programs to allow minority groups to gain employment in business and government, and
8. Appropriate representation of peoples in local, regional, provincial, and federal governments dependent upon the percentage of numbers of peoples under their jurisdiction. For example, if the Canadian population included 5% Metis people, then 5% of the federal government should be comprised of Metis people.

All peoples must become willing view each other as equals, people must realize everyone is unique and different in their own way. In order to extinguish racism and discrimination in Canada, all people must be willing to accept other peoples differences rather than just accepting the similarities.

V. ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

i. Environment

Traditionally, the Metis were a hunting and gathering society by nature, in that they lived off the renewable resources provided within their local environment. The harvesting of renewable resources included the hunting of wild animals and game birds for meat, and the gathering of berries, roots, grains, and vegetables from the forests and gardens. Dependency on the environment taught the Metis to view

and treat the environment like a member of the family, it was to be cared for and protected for use by future generations. The term 'environment' was all encompassing, it includes the air, land, water, animals, birds, trees, and plants. In the past, the soil was rich in nutrients, the water and air were pure, the forests were clean, and the animals, fish, and plants were in a healthy abundance. However, as time passed the environment was altered by outside forces, seemingly more powerful than the Metis' ability to stop them or nature's ability to heal itself. Today, all the elements of the environment have been contaminated by the irresponsible actions of capitalistic, non-Aboriginal governments, industry, and people.

In commenting health and environmental concerns, a woman from Baden commented, "The government will not listen to us, they only listen to big corporations and farmers, who only care about making money. These big companies come in here and destroy everything...they pollute the air and water with their smoke and effluent, they destroy the animals' habitat by cutting down all the trees, they destroy everything and then they leave when they cannot make money anymore.

People are getting sick when they eat the fish who have been poisoned by acid rain and the run off from farmers' fields which contain herbicides and fertilizers. The rivers and lakes are filling up with silt because the trees have been cut down and there is nothing to hold the soil intact.

A person can't even pick berries and traditional medicines near the highways and power lines anymore, because instead of cutting the trees by hand, the Department of Highways and Hydro are using poisons to kill the trees. The poison

gets into everything, it pollutes the entire food chain. The water gets polluted from run off of the land, so the fish get sick...the plants get poisoned, so the animals get sick...in turn, other animals and humans eat the animals and soon the entire ecological system is contaminated. Humans are destroying the world environment, they are killing Mother Earth.”³⁴

Basically, the Metis people feel the government does not care about the environment, but like large corporations has only "the almighty dollar in mind.”³⁵

The Northern Metis believe environmental maintenance and care must be Canadian societies' highest priority. Canada is rich in renewable and non-renewable resources, however, these resources must be preserved and maintained for the use of future generations or soon nothing will be left. The Metis recommend control over the environment and resources be granted to and become the responsibility of the people.

Committees comprised of committed volunteers should be organized in different areas to control and manage the land, waters, renewable and non-renewable resources. The aforementioned committees would be independent and not subject to governmental and corporate interference. The people must take the active role of preserving and caring for the environment, as the government and industrial corporations have proven negligent through their insensitivity and lack of positive action on environmental issues.

³⁴Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

³⁵Snow Lake Community Meeting, 1993.

ii. Sports and Recreation

Recreation facilities and opportunities are in great demand in the Metis communities of The Pas region. To date, sports and recreation opportunities are practically non-existent in most Metis communities, except for rare occasions. As a result of limited opportunities and facilities in sports and recreation, many Metis youth and adults are committing petty crimes or turning to alcohol, drugs and gambling to relieve the boredom. As one may realize, the use of addictive substances does not help anything or anyone, in fact, it only compounds the problem.

The Northern Metis recommended more focus be given by the governments of Canada and Manitoba to establish and/or improve recreation facilities and opportunities in Metis communities. The people recommend the government support and provide funding to the Metis Sports and Recreation Council (MS&RC) which has been formed to provide sports and recreation in Manitoba Metis communities. The Northern Metis support the goals of MS&RC to provide status blind opportunities to allow Metis people full access to sports and recreation activities of choice according to their level of personal commitment, ability, and motivation. MS&RC view sports and recreation as a holistic approach to strengthening the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual aspects of community, family and individual life.

iii. Hardships of Living in the North

Living in northern Manitoba has many difficulties attached for Metis people such as the high prices of goods/services, extensive and expensive travel between

remote communities, and the fact that decisions affecting the north are made primarily by southern Manitobans.

One can expect prices to be higher, when one considers the amount of travel required to deliver goods and/or services. However, most people believe they are being subjected to unfair price increases, since most businesses have a monopoly in many communities.

An area of great concern to Metis people is the outrageous prices northerners are forced to pay for hydro. Hydro is an abundant resource produced in the north, yet northerners must pay more for hydro than people living in the south. Northerners cannot understand why they are paying more for a product produced in "our own backyards"³⁶, while southerners reap the benefits of lower prices.

The Northern Metis believe many of the problems created in the north are due to southerners making decisions on issues facing the north. It was stated on numerous occasions that, "The southerners making the decisions for the north, have only the interest of the south in mind. Southerners do not care about the north, plus they have no idea what it is like and they don't care what it is like to live here. They figure the north is there for them to pick and choose from without no regard for the people living in the north."³⁷

³⁶Young's Point Community Meeting, 1993.

³⁷Grand Rapids Meeting, 1993.

The Northern Metis believe the north is being exploited by southerners to meet the need of the south without any consideration being given to residents of the north.

The exploitation of the north is exemplified in the following areas:

1. The building of hydro dams to service the south, meanwhile regions of the north are flooded, which destroys the land, water, and livelihood of many Metis and other peoples
2. The harvesting of northern forests to serve to southern markets, which ultimately destroy the animals' natural habitat and the ability for people to hunt to support themselves
3. The lack of adequate government services and assistance
4. The cutting and regionalization of government services
5. Inadequate road and highway maintenance
6. Higher prices for goods and services
7. The implementation of user fees to access medical services and,
8. The lack of representation within different levels of government

The Northern Metis recommend the delivery of private and governmental goods and services be improved to match the level of delivery in the south. People and government based out of southern Manitoba do not have the right to subject the Northern Metis to poor and/or unfair treatment.

The Northern Metis recommend the importance of having decisions on issues facing the north, being resolved in the north by northerners. Northerners cannot depend on the south to meet their needs of the north, and therefore must take control of their futures.

In conclusion, the areas of healing, self-sufficiency, self-determination, the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and additional concerns to the Northern Metis have been portrayed and discussed throughout this paper. The Northern Metis trust their concerns and recommendations will be recognized as legitimate and addressed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Canadian federal government, provincial governments, and Canadian society as a whole. The Metis of northern Manitoba are standing up to be heard and addressed, as no longer will they be mistreated, ignored, or forgotten.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the concerns and recommendations of the Northern Metis of The Pas Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation. The summary will outline the areas of sensitivity to Northern Metis of Manitoba, which will include healing, self-sufficiency, self-determination, relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and additional concerns. Each section is intended to reflect the concerns and recommendations in the corresponding main text.

I. HEALING

Personal and collective health are essential for Metis people to survive and flourish.

i. Health Care Delivery

- The Northern Metis are being subjected to poor health care delivery due to a lack of professional assistance by doctors and nurses in hospitals and clinics.
- Doctors ignorant in treating addictions are creating problems, rather than helping people with alcohol and drug addictions.
- Metis and Aboriginal persons are shamed and made to feel second class, when they access medical services.
- People feel pharmacies are "ripping them off"³⁸ by charged name brand prices for generic drugs.
- Metis people are suffering due to a lack of medical facilities and services within The Pas region, some communities have nursing stations, but the stations do not have the equipment and staff to meet peoples' needs.
- The Manitoba government health reform policy is negatively affecting hospitals and the clients they serve, in addition, most people cannot afford to the user fees demanded by the government.

Recommendations:

- The Northern Metis have the right to access medical services in northern Manitoba and are entitled to consistent, efficient, and courteous service.

³⁸Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

- The Metis recommend health care professional receive sensitivity training to help them understand and assist Metis people in a professional manner.
- Doctors must return to their traditional roles as healers, rather than the pill pushers they have become.
- The Canadian government should consider adopting medical care delivery systems which have proved successful in areas of the United States and Europe.
- The government must provide prevention programs and health care services to all Metis communities in The Pas region.
- Existing nursing stations must be properly equipped and staffed to meet peoples' need, plus more nursing stations must be constructed.

ii. Social Services

- Clients must provide two (2) notice to their social worker to receive travel monies from social services, this policy does not consider emergency situations or government office hours.
- Social assistance recipients are confused why a policy exists which pays more for travel in mornings and less in afternoons, when the distance does not change.
- Many people, including some Metis are abusing the social assistance system. Metis people are very concerned about the discriminatory treatment they receive while accessing government services.

Recommendations:

- The Northern Metis believe all government workers interacting with Aboriginal people must be sensitized to the culture of the Metis and the difficulties they face in society.
- Racist attitudes and behaviours towards Metis and Aboriginal people from government workers must be extinguished.
- Government policies which affect Metis people in negative manners must be amended or removed, and policies need to be coherent and reasonable.
- All people receiving social assistance benefits should have to work for their money, from which only the elderly and disabled would be excluded.

iii. Metis Lifestyles

- People are taking the conveniences of modern life for granted by not eating, exercising or getting sufficient rest.
- The Northern Metis are seeking to revitalize "Indian medicine"³⁹ practises rather than being dependent on non-Aboriginal medicine and medical procedures, but most of the traditional knowledge regarding "Indian medicine"⁴⁰ has been lost.
- Forced assimilation has placed traditional Metis culture on the verge of extinction

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Metis people have the responsibility to preserve and maintain their health.
- The need to revitalize traditional practises of medicine.
- Revitalizing traditional Metis values, beliefs and practises are required to allow people to heal from the effects of forced assimilation.

iv. Addictions

- Concerns about the number of Metis people becoming addicted to alcohol, drugs, and gambling.
- Addictions are the symptoms of "dis-ease"⁴¹

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- More addiction treatment centres are needed in The Pas region.
- Seeking help for addictions through twelve (12) step self -help groups.

II. SELF SUFFICIENCY

- The right to survive must be complimented with the right to flourish and prosper as collectives and individuals.

³⁹Baden Community Meeting, 1993.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹The Pas Meeting, 1993.

i. Local Markets

- Most Metis communities lack the businesses and services to generate employment and stability.
- People do not shop locally due to inflated pricing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Local stores in Metis communities must increase inventories and lower price to encourage people to shop in their local communities.
- Local shopping must be encouraged to support local economy.

ii. Government Grants/Loans

- Practically no businesses or services are owned and/or operated by Metis in their local communities.
- Metis people have trouble accessing government grants/loans, due to discrimination and lack of professional help from government workers.
- It is difficult to generate monies for the personal investment required to attain government grants/loans, due to lack of jobs and dependence on social assistance or unemployment benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Government workers must become sensitive to difficulties Metis have in attaining government funding and become willing to be of assistance.
- Government should base criteria for attaining funding on areas other than ability to provide personal investment.
- Government funding and assistance would be an asset in stabilizing and creating employment in Metis communities.

iii. Unemployability

- Lack of industry and employment opportunities in most Metis communities creates dependence on jobs outside of home communities.
- Metis people subjected to racism and discrimination in seeking employment outside their communities.
- Government has sold out the natural resources native to Metis communities to major industrial corporations.

- Corporations will not hire local people, despite qualifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Metis people must create their own employment opportunities.
- Government must provide the same assistance to Metis people, as is shown to major corporations.

iv. Education

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Metis people request the construction of secondary education and trades facilities in the region to compliment existing structures in The Pas, Manitoba.
- Education and training to are needed to meet the needs of the people in the region.

III. SELF DETERMINATION

- The Metis know what is best for Metis people, non-Metis judgements and direction are not required.

i. Self-Government

- Most people unclear on what Metis self-government would mean.
- Metis fear mismanagement and misappropriation of funds.
- More education and training are needed first.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Self-government is inevitable, but education and training are needed first.
- Land claims and constitutional issues must be settled before self-government can become a reality.
- The term 'self-government' may be too harsh, perhaps it could be a co-op Nation.

IV. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

i. Government Issues

- Governments ignore voice and concerns of Metis people.
- Governments are not the true governments of Metis people.
- Government deals with Inuit and Indian peoples, as Aboriginal peoples, but will not recognize or deal with Aboriginal Metis peoples.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Government must be sensitized to hardships of Metis people.
- Governments must become willing to work with and fulfil their constitutional obligation to Metis people.

ii. Racism and Discrimination

- Non-Aboriginal people show racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards Aboriginal peoples.
- Racism affects Metis people in negative manners.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Stricter laws and harsh sentences for racial offenders.
- Mandatory sensitivity training for racial offenders.
- Introduction of mandatory racial programs in schools.
- Creation of special committees to deal with racial matters.
- Public awareness workshops.
- Increase affirmative action programs within business and government.
- Representation in governments to equal percentage in populations.
- All people must accept each other's differences, not just the similarities.

V. ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

i. Environment

- Entire ecological food chain is being contaminated from abuse by humans, industry and government.
- Government will not listen to peoples' concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- People must take back control of the natural resources and the environment.

ii. Sports and Recreation

- Lack of recreation facilities and opportunities in most Metis communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Government must put greater focus on establishing recreation facilities and opportunities in Metis communities.
- Funding should be provided to Metis Sports and Recreation Council to assist in their work to assist Metis communities and individuals.

iii. Hardships of Living in the North

- Prices for goods and services is over inflated.
- Hydro rates are reasonable, considering hydro is produced in the north.
- Problems in the north stem from southerners making the decisions on matters affecting the north.
- The north is viewed by the south as irrelevant pawn.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prices of goods and services will lowered to match southern markets.
- Northerners, not southerners should be making the decision on matters directly affecting the north.