UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

'If I Didn't Do Something, My Spirit Would Die...':

Grassroots Activism of Aboriginal Women in Calgary and Edmonton, 1951-1985

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the political, social, economic, and cultural grassroots activism of Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985. Politically, Aboriginal women were involved at the grassroots in the formation of *Indian Rights for Indian Women* (the Alberta Committee and the national committee), the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society,* and the *Métis Association of Alberta.* Economically, Aboriginal women were at the grassroots level of housing and employment initiatives within Edmonton. Socially, Aboriginal women in Edmonton reacted against discrimination. Both Calgary and Edmonton Aboriginal women were instrumental in programs and services that encouraged education in both worlds; traditional Aboriginal education and contemporary education. Initiatives in Calgary included programs for youth in the city, such as the "*Ninaki* Club for Girls." While maintaining a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity, Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985 resisted assimilation; Edmonton Aboriginal women were predominately active in political, economic and social initiatives while Calgary Aboriginal women were more focused on social and cultural initiatives, particularly in relation to youth.

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I would like to thank my family, whose strong connection to the Wet'suwet'en culture and traditions has been influential in my life: my maternal grandparents *Nuk qua' oohn* (late Julie Isaac) and *Satsan* (late Patrick Isaac Sr.), my paternal grandparents *Tsai Bai Tsa* (late Mary George) and *Gisday'wa* (late Thomas George), my mother *Gulughun* (Rita George), and my father *Tsai Bai Tsa* (late Andrew George Sr.). Their knowledge shared through oral history has given me a solid foundation in my understanding of who we are as Wets'suwet'en; as Aboriginal people. I want to acknowledge my brothers and sisters and their families for their support and encouragement: *Atna* (Brian), Gary, *Skit'en* (Andrew), Cynthia, and Gregory. Especially, I want to acknowledge my wonderful husband, John, who has loved, supported, encouraged and walked with me through this journey.

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Grassroots Activism of Aboriginal Women in Calgary and Edmonton, 1951 to 1985

> Just now, the moral courage, the stamina and the sinew of grandmother's heart and spirit are obscured and covered with fear and frustration...Let us not fail Tomorrow's Woman. Let us give respect and dignity to Today's Woman. Let us let Yesterday's Woman rest in peace. Let us give them the knowledge that they have done a good job. It is up to us.
>
> Mary Ann Lavallee, 1968

This excerpt from a keynote address by Mary Ann Lavallee, who was from Broadview, Saskatchewan, was delivered to the delegates of the First Alberta Native Women's Conference in Edmonton, Alberta[1]. This call to Aboriginal[2] women from the grassroots up was a reminder to them to recover the strength and courage of the grandmothers and to take action. Aboriginal women from 1951 to 1985, in Calgary and Edmonton sought to address concerns connected to the well-being of future generations. Grassroots activism[3] of Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton, grew from political, social, economic, and cultural concerns and resulted in the formation of organizations such as *Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW)* and *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS)* and an increase in women's participation in the *Métis Association of Alberta.* Despite the male-dominated political and social climate during the mid 20th century, not only in North

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[1] Mary Ann Lavallee was from Broadview, Saskatchewan. Ralph G. Steinhauer Fonds, "First Alberta Native Women's Conference, 1968," (Calgary: Glenbow Archives). M7934 Box 5 File # 46.

[2] The term "Aboriginal" will be used to denote all persons of "Native" ancestry in this thesis, which will include "Non-Status Indians." In certain discussions, such as those directly relating to the *Indian Act,* the term "Indian" may be applied. "Under the *Constitution Act, 1982*, three different Aboriginal peoples are recognized in section 35 as possessing Aboriginal and treaty rights: the "Indian, Inuit and Métis people." A more elaborate explanation on terminology will be discussed later in the introduction. John Giokas and Robert K. Groves, "Collective and Individual Recognition in Canada: The *Indian Act* Regime," in Who Are Canada's Aboriginal Peoples?: Recognition, Definition, and Jurisdiction, ed. Paul L.A.H. Chartrand (Saskatchewan: John Giokas and Robert K. Groves, 2002), 41-42.

[3] For the purpose of this thesis, "grassroots activism" will be defined as: people at the foundation or initial level of a movement, organization, project, or protest.

American culture, but also within some Aboriginal organizations during this period (such as the National Indian Brotherhood [NIB])[4], Aboriginal women activists were instrumental in addressing issues connected to housing, employment, human rights, discrimination, education, youth, and culture for the Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985 maintained a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity and ensured maintenance of these values in urban settings. While resisting assimilation,[5] Edmonton Aboriginal women were predominantly active in political, economic, and social initiatives while Calgary Aboriginal women were more focused on social and cultural initiatives, particularly with the youth. Among activists in both locations there was a strong focus on issues of their generation, as well as the generations that would follow. For example, contemporary education was viewed as important, but not to the point where it would stifle or inhibit connection to Aboriginal culture and identity. The women actively resisted oppression and discrimination drawing on a foundation of Aboriginal culture and identity and they sought to adapt (not assimilate) and initiate programs and services to secure a new foundation for Aboriginal people in Calgary and Edmonton.

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[4] The National Indian Brotherhood derived from the National Indian Council in the 1960s, a national Aboriginal organization formed to address Aboriginal concerns country-wide. From 1980-1982, the NIB underwent re-organization and became the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 339, 349.

[5] Sociologist Cora J. Voyageur explains, "Missionary and government ideology held that the only way for Indians to survive was to give up everything that defined them as a people: religion, language, lifestyle, and identity." Cora J. Voyageur, "Contemporary Aboriginal Women in Canada," in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, 2nd ed. Eds. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), 87. The notion of assimilation as a solution to all complexities confronting Aboriginal peoples extends back to the early 1800s and is still in some ways viewed as a simple solution to complex challenges. Olive Patricia Dickason explained: "The imperial civil administration for British North America was dominated by two ideas concerning Amerindians in 1830: that as a people they were disappearing, and that those who remained should either be removed to communities isolated from Euro-Canadians or else be assimilated." Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 203. Please see Appendix B, "The Doctrine of Assimilation".

Aboriginal culture and identity can be defined in many different ways. However, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples[6] outlined some of the main concepts as defined by Aboriginal people themselves, specifically urban Aboriginal people. "Cultural identity" was defined by the following factors:

> One's traditional culture (particularly the role of elders, of spirituality, community life, and aboriginal languages), one's family (particularly grandparents, and the extended family), the land and the environment (including the experience of bush life, nature, and rights to land), and a variety of social relationships (friends, clubs, sports).[7]

The report also stated that Aboriginal cultural identity refers to one's perception or belief that one is Aboriginal, the importance that one has to an Aboriginal group or groups, and the level of importance that one attaches to being Aboriginal is important to one's identity.[8] These were some ways in which Aboriginal culture and identity are interrelated. The report found that Commission participants articulated the importance of traditional values and culture, including language, elders, spirituality, arts and community.[9]

Traditionally, Aboriginal people gathered to celebrate their cultures, whether it was, for example, a Sundance, a Potlatch, or a Longhouse ceremony. Community has been central for Aboriginal culture. Scholar Betty Bastien described the close relationship between culture and identity:

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[6] Dickason described that in 1991 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was set up to investigate and report (the report was to be presented in 1994, but was presented in 1996) on Aboriginal peoples across Canada (under the government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney). Dickason, 413. Peter Russel, professor of Political Science from the University of Toronto explained the significance of the Commission, "This is the first time in modern history that the non-Aboriginal people have sat down with Aboriginal people and together....reviewed where they've been together and tried to chart a course on where they want to go." Dickason, 414.

[7] J.W. Berry, Aboriginal Cultural Identity (Ottawa: Report Prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Public Policy and Aboriginal Peoples, 1965-1992, Urban Perspectives Research, 1994), 3.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Berry, 33.

> One of the major roles of Indian women has been to maintain 'tribal identity' for their children and their children's children. Tribal identity is based on the collective experience, in which relationships are characterized by the interdependencies of self with others, in which partnership is the basis of life and the force through which life is strengthened and renewed, and in which children experience themselves as tribal people rather than as individuals.[10]

In the urban settings, although there was a collective Aboriginal community, the diverse identities and cultures were still acknowledged and respected. This thesis demonstrates that Aboriginal women who moved to urban settings, acknowledged that maintenance of culture and identity was vital. Aboriginal women, highly regarded and respected in traditional Aboriginal culture, were central in their communities.[11] Grassroots activists attempted to reclaim this respect not only towards Aboriginal women within Calgary and Edmonton, but towards Aboriginal people, thereby ensuring recognition of Aboriginal identity. The Aboriginal women central to grassroots initiatives in Calgary and Edmonton resisted assimilation by ensuring that both Aboriginal culture and identity became part of the urban landscape.

This thesis illustrates the ways in which Aboriginal women not only embraced their cultures and identities, but also demonstrates how they chose to translate these values into the urban setting. These women were integral in numerous programs, services, projects, and events that communicated the richness and importance of Aboriginal languages, education, ceremonies, and community. These women embraced their histories and expressed through their activism, their identities as Kainai, Nehiyaw, Dene or Métis, despite obstacles or challenges that they encountered. These women acknowledged their

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[10] Betty Bastien, "Voices Through Time," in Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, Strength eds. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 127.
[11] Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Women as Centre and symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities," The Canadian Journal of Native Studies 3:1 (1983): 40.

diverse cultures, as well as their identities as "Aboriginal women." They respected the diversity, yet acknowledged the collective Aboriginal identities.

I will use the term "Aboriginal" and "Native" interchangeably. In rare instances, the term "First Nation" or "Indigenous" is used. Where possible I will refer to individual nations such as the Kainai (Blood), Cree, Dene, or Métis. In the latter portion of the twentieth century into the twenty first century, Aboriginal people have reclaimed the right to use their own names and identities, such as "Kainai" or "Nehiyaw" (Cree).[12] "Indian" is used for those people who fall under *Indian Act* legislation and in common terminology. I will also use "Indian" when differentiating between "Indian" women and other women when discussing *Indian Act* legislation.

The dates 1951 and 1985 represent two landmarks in history that had a direct impact on the lives of Aboriginal women. Amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951 enabled women to be officially involved in band politics;[13] 1951 was also a turning point for Aboriginal women because of the amendments to the *Indian Act* which added further restrictions. These changes will be discussed in depth in Chapter One, which is devoted to the *IRIW.* In 1985, Bill C-31 restored the "Status" of women who lost this "Status" due to marriage and were obliged to live away from their home communities.[14]

Social geographer Evelyn Peters explained that from 1951 to 1981 the Aboriginal population in Calgary increased from 62 to 7,310 while in Edmonton it increased from 616

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[12] Nancy LeClair, Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1998), 110.
[13] Cora Voyageur, "Contemporary Aboriginal Women in Canada," in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, 2nd ed. Eds. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), 89.
[14] Bill C-31 also restored Status to children and others who lost their status prior to 1985. For example, others who may have lost their Status were those who obtained a university degree for ministry, law, teaching, or for medicine. Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 263. For a description of "Status Indian," "non-Status Indian ," and "Treaty Indian," , please see Chapter One, page 17 and 18.

to 13, 750.[15] Aboriginal people moved to these urban areas because of marriage, or in search of housing, employment, or education. The Aboriginal groups that migrated to these areas included the Blackfoot, Cree, Métis, and Dene. My reasons for choosing Calgary and Edmonton stemmed from the escalation of urban migration of Aboriginal population in the 1950s. These urban centres are the largest cities in Alberta. The topic of Aboriginal women's grassroots activism in these two cities, and its impact, has not yet been examined. These urban centres provided a better opportunity to include a larger urban Métis population in the analysis (particularly in Edmonton, which will be discussed in Chapter Three). Many women were forced to move away from their communities because of Indian Act legislation, which will be discussed fully in Chapter One. This study demonstrates the impact of this trend on grassroots activism of Aboriginal women.

Few studies focus on Aboriginal women in Western Canadian cities, and those that exist emphasize that Aboriginal women were made to feel uncomfortable in urban settings. Historian Sarah Carter asserts that during the early intensive settlement period of the late nineteenth century, Aboriginal people, and specifically women, were unwelcome in new non-Aboriginal settlements. This was expressed through select implementation of the "pass system" and through construction and circulation of unflattering stereotypes. After 1885, the "pass system" was introduced which restricted the movement of First Nations people; they were unable to leave their reserve communities without a pass from the Indian Agent or farm instructor.[16] Through their marriages with often prominent non-Aboriginal men, Aboriginal women crisscrossed and threatened cultural divides. These marriages also

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[15] Evelyn Peters, "Developing Federal Policy for First Nations People in Urban Areas: 1945-1975," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 21, no. 5 (2001): 65.
[16] Sarah Carter, Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1997), 187.

produced the Métis, who were seen as dangerous and subversive. Aboriginal women, in particular, were deterred from entering into the urban settings; the image of the "Indian woman" as dangerous was used as a manipulative tool.[17]

Jean Barman's article, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality During the Colonial Encounter," describes the experiences of Aboriginal women in an urban colonial British Columbia setting; Victoria, B.C. in the late 1800s. She asserts that in Victoria, Aboriginal women were portrayed as 'sexually transgressive' and this served as a justification for male newcomers to seduce these women without accountability.[18] According to Barman, in colonial Victoria, Aboriginal women were not afforded a chance to adapt to changing circumstances, rather they were subjected to the goals of the white male.[19] Beyond the early settlement era, little has been written on Aboriginal women in urban settings, but the essays in Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society suggests that urban areas remained uncomfortable and unwelcoming environments.[20] For example, in her article, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice," Sherene Razack demonstrates that in 1995, Aboriginal women continued to encounter gendered and racial marginalization in urban settings.[21]

The topic of Aboriginal women's grassroots activism in Western Canada has received little attention from historians or other scholars. Kathleen Jamieson provided an overview of Aboriginal women, their relationship to the *Indian Act,* and their activism, in

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[17] Carter, 187.
[18] Jean Barman, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality During the Colonial Encounter," in Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past, eds. Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 206.
[19] Barman, 222.
[20] Sherene H. Razack ed., Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002).
[21] Sherene H. Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice," in Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 126.

her publications Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus and "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act." Jamieson contends that the consequences of the *Indian Act* upon Aboriginal women were discriminative and punitive.[22] She examines the *Indian Act,* the Jeannette Lavell and Yvonne Bedard cases,[23] the national body of the *IRIW,* and the various challenges that Aboriginal women encountered in their determination to change the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act.* Jamieson focused her study of the *Indian Act* and its impact on Aboriginal women in "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act," by examining how the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* developed. She paid particular attention to a historical and sociological perspective stating the discrimination developed from sexist, ethnocentric, paternalistic, and racist overtones.[24] Jamieson primarily focused on national initiatives connected to the *IRIW* and reactions to the *Indian Act;* however she only briefly touched on topics related to Alberta.

Grassroots activism in New Brunswick was explored when the Tobique Women's Group entrusted author Janet Silman to record their experiences in Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out.[25] This group, which originated on Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick, formed in the mid-1970s to address issues such as unemployment, housing, and health for women and children.[26] In 1977, the Tobique women, who were traditionally matrilineal (Maliseet), started to protest the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act.*[27] When the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against Lavell and Bedard in 1973, there was no legal recourse in Canada for Indian women to challenge the discriminatory sections of the

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[22] Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1978), 1.
[23] These cases will be discussed more fully in the Chapter One, which is dedicated to the *IRIW.*
[24] Jamieson, "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act," 112.
[25] Janet Silman, ed., Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out (Toronto: Women's Press, 1987).
[26] Ibid., 11, 12.
[27] Ibid., 11.

Indian Act.[28] Recognizing the fact that there were limited approaches to challenge the *Indian Act*, the Tobique Women's Group and Sandra Lovelace brought a human rights complaint against Canada to the United Nations (U.N.) in 1977.[29] Lovelace lost her status through marriage and agreed to take her case to the United Nations.[30] In 1981, the U.N. Human Rights Committee ruled in favour of Lovelace; the ruling was that Canada was in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[31] This book, which was written primarily in the words of the members of the Tobique Women's Group, including Lovelace, is a valuable testimony of their experiences of activism.[32]

Native Studies scholar Grace J.M.W. Ouellette discussed Aboriginal women's activism in her 2002 book, The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism.[33] Her study includes a critique of liberal, Marxist, radical, and social feminism, which then moves into an analysis of the Aboriginal women's movement.[34] Using taped interviews of twenty informants from national, provincial and community Aboriginal women's organizations (primarily with women residing in Ottawa and Saskatchewan), as well as academic institutions, Ouellette explored the roles of Aboriginal women, the *Indian Act* and its amendment Bill C-31[35], and the relationship between Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men.[36] She described Aboriginal women's activism in relation to traditional beliefs, contemporary issues and their reactions to these

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[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Ibid., 15.
[30] Ibid., 74.
[31] Ibid., 14.
[32] Ibid., 3.
[33] Grace J.M.W. Ouellette, The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, c2002).
[34] Ouellette, 5.
[35] The impact of the *Indian Act* and the ensuing amendment Bill C-31 will be discussed in Chapter One.
[36] Ouellette, 53-69.

issues.[37] Ouellette contends that Indigenous women's activism in Canada differs from Euro-Canadian feminism because the nature of colonization (which includes patriarchal structure and dynamics) adds another dimension to the oppression of Aboriginal women.[38] She observes that although there are common issues and concerns, Aboriginal women's activism and feminism are not synonymous.

Although little attention has been paid to the topic of Aboriginal women's activism in Western Canada, Historian Heather Howard-Bobiwash has explored Aboriginal women's activism in her article, "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto from 1950-1975." She contends that Aboriginal women engaged in community building in Toronto as an emergent 'middle class,' (she equates this "middle class" status to economic success) using Aboriginal historical and cultural experiences as a foundation.[39] Bobiwash's interpretations are convincing, as some of the experiences and dynamics she outlined in some respects, parallel those of Aboriginal women's activism in Calgary and Edmonton. She argues, for example, that "Native women's actions were based on their common experiences of politicized identity, cultural appropriation and devaluation, and the need to affirm cultural identity and build strong self-determined communities."[40] Bobiwash explains that Native women in Toronto were involved in community programs such as the North American Indian Club and Native Centre's Lady Auxillary.[41] Their involvement with these organizations and interaction with members of the "Toronto white elite," and a strong connection to the Native tradition

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[37] Ouellette, 76-78.
[38] Ouellette, 12.
[39] Heather Howard-Bobiwash, "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975," American Indian Quarterly 27: 3,4 (Summer & Fall 2003)L 566-582.
[40] Bobiwash, 579.
[41] Bobiwash, 567.

precipitated a great sense of cultural pride.[42] Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton tended to have some interaction with people outside the Aboriginal community (such as municipal/provincial/federal governments and school boards), however, much of their activism was based on interaction and liaison within the Aboriginal community.

Historian Nancy Janovicek analyzed urban migration, self governance, and Native women's organization in Thunder Bay, Ontario from 1972-1989.[43] Janovicek explained that Anishinabequek people used the collective Aboriginal rights movement to defend the rights of Aboriginal people.[44] She also explained that Native women played an important role in cultural retention, education, and community work.[45] Janovicek asserts that the Anishinabequeck took control of services for the Aboriginal population in Thunder Bay and based these services on Aboriginal culture and values which protected their identity.[46] Specifically, she investigates the 1978 founding of Beendigen, an emergency shelter for Native women and their children.[47] Janovicek's analysis of Beendigen shows how Anishinabequek people in Thunder Bay and the ONWA reacted against government policies of assimilation and organized services that drew on Aboriginal knowledge, culture and values.[48] Janovicek's observations and interpretations, based on oral histories with the women involved in the founding of Beendigen,[49] provide a much needed perspective on Aboriginal women, that until recently, has been overlooked.

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[42] Bobiwash, 567.
[43] Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self Governance, and Native Women's Organization in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," American Indian Quarterly 27: 3-4 (2003): 548.
[44] Janovicek, 560.
[45] Ibid., 560.
[46] Ibid., 549.
[47] Beendigen was founded by the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). Janovicek, 548.
[48] Ibid., 549.
[49] Ibid., 549.

Jo-Anne Fiske concentrates on some aspects of Aboriginal women's activism in Western Canada in her investigation of Carrier women (of central British Columbia) and their roles within their communities. Fiske asserts that there is a direct link between the matrilineal structure of Carrier society, female domestic authority, and high esteem for female reproductive roles and contemporary political action.[50] Fiske also explains that in this situation, Aboriginal women are politically active and well respected community leaders. Fiske's analysis demonstrates how Aboriginal women's activism is not a new phenomenon. Aboriginal women were always active at the community level and were continuously at the heart of initiatives designed to secure the well-being of future generations.

Aboriginal women's activism in urban settings drew on a long standing tradition of similar involvement within their own home communities. Judge Mary Ellen Turpel described the critical role of Aboriginal women within their communities, "Women are at the centre. We are the keepers of the culture, the educators, the ones who must instruct the children to respect the Earth, and the ones who ensure that our leaders are remembering and 'walking' with their responsibilities demonstrably in mind."[51] Aboriginal women were almost always at the heart of initiatives or actions based on community needs and security. Historian Jennifer S.H. Brown suggested that with more investigation, scholars could uncover further evidence regarding Métis society; she concluded that Métis communities were centered on the women.[52] Brown reviewed studies that reinforced her position. For

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[50] Jo-Anne Fiske, "Carrier Women and the Politics of Mothering," in Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag & Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 361.
[51] Mary Ellen Turpel, "Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Legacy of the Canadian State for First Nations Women," Canadian Journal of Women and the Law 6, no. 2 (1993): 181.
[52] Brown, 39, 45.

example, she referred to a paper authored by Charles A. Bishop and Shepard Krech III, entitled, "Matriorganization: The basis of Aboriginal Subarctic Organization."[53] Bishop and Krech found that early post-contact subarctic Aboriginal groups were matrilocal, meaning that a new husband took up residence with his wife's relations.[54] Furthermore, they explained that some Athapaskan groups, including the Cree, were matrilineal.[55] Brown also quoted Louis Riel in reference to the equal nature of paternal and maternal respect, "It is true that our Indian origin is humble, but it is indeed just that we honour our mothers as well as our fathers."[56] Brown's analysis demonstrates that Métis women were central in their communities and she challenges scholars to further explore the social, economic, and cultural capacities of Métis women in their societies.[57]

A 1954 newspaper report, "The Indian Homemaker," discussed the nature of Aboriginal women's involvement at the community levels. The article described the activity of these women at the level of the "Homemakers' Clubs," using the objectives of the Club as a guide:

> The objectives are: to assist Indian women to acquire sound and approved practices for greater home efficiency: to help the aged and less fortunate and improve living conditions on the reserve: to discover, stimulate and train leadership: to sponsor and actively assist in all worthwhile projects for the betterment of the community: to develop better, happier and more useful citizens.[58]

Indian Homemakers Clubs started in Saskatchewan in 1937; in 1954 there were 150 groups in Canada, forty in Manitoba, twenty-five in Saskatchewan, seven in Alberta, and eight in

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[53] Brown, 40.
[54] Brown, 40.
[55] Brown, 40.
[56] Brown, 44.
[57] Brown, 45.
[58] "The Indian Homemaker," The Western Producer August 26, 1954, p. 10.

British Columbia.[59] Dorinda Mae Stahl's analysis of the Indian Homemaking Program, Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, 1967-1972, provides insight into the cross-cultural relationship between Aboriginal women and White Extension instructors.[60] The instructors traveled to Saskatchewan reserves to teach Indian women various domestic skills and engaged in "informal cross cultural education."[61] Stahl's study illustrates the ways in which Aboriginal women embraced new concepts, yet retain a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity. The interest in the objectives of Homemaker's Clubs indicated a willingness on behalf of Aboriginal women to engage in community leadership roles. Aboriginal women were not newcomers to the realm of activism, leadership, and community-building.

This study builds on and adds to the scholarship on Aboriginal women activists in urban settings. This thesis draws on Jamieson's study of how Aboriginal women were affected by the *Indian Act*, but will focus on the Edmonton experience. Departing from Carter, Barman, and articles included in Razack's Race, Space, and Law, I will focus on Aboriginal women's urban experience from 1951 to 1985, when Aboriginal women still contended with stereotypes and discrimination, but were more vocal in addressing these issues and worked to dispel myths and create a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal people in the urban settings. Like Bobiwash, Fiske, Janovicek and Ouellette, I will analyze activism of Aboriginal women, but paying particular attention to Calgary and Edmonton. Drawing on their interpretations that retention of Aboriginal culture and identity

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[59] Ibid., p. 10.
[60] White Extension Instructors traveled to Saskatchewan Reserves to teach Indian women homemaking skills. Dorinda Mae Stahl, "Marvellous Times: The Indian Homemaking Program and its Effects on Extension Instructors at the Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, 1967-1972," (MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2002), ii.
[61] Stahl, ii.

was foundational, I will illustrate how each of these women in their own ways resisted assimilation in their initiatives. Wherever possible, I highlight the voices of the Aboriginal women themselves through the use of oral history interviews, archival documents and newspapers. The women included in this analysis are: L. Cheryl Blood-Bouvier, Nellie Carlson, Senator Thelma Chalifoux, Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann Daniels, Pauline Dempsey, Jenny Margetts, Lillian Shirt (Piche), Muriel Stanley Venne and Rose Yellow Feet. The nations which these women are descendents from are the Kainai, Cree, Dene and Métis.

The central argument of this thesis is that while maintaining a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity, Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985 resisted assimilation in the realms of political, social, economic and cultural initiatives. Chapter One examines the genesis of the *IRIW*, the organization's influence and the opposition the members encountered. Edmonton Aboriginal women were at the grassroots in the formation of the *Alberta Committee of the IRIW* in reaction to discriminatory components of the *Indian Act.* Nellie Carlson and Jenny Margetts were at the heart of the formation of the *Alberta Committee of the IRIW.* Christine Daniels communicated grievances via correspondence. Their identities as "Indian women" were not recognized by the Government of Canada; the *Indian Act* forced them to move from their home communities.

Chapter Two discusses the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS)* which was an organization that was not limited to urban dwellers but primarily focused on the concerns of Métis and Treaty women. Christine Daniels, Nellie Carlson, Jenny Margetts and Rose Yellow Feet were founding members of the *VANWS.* Recognizing that Treaty and Métis people resided in urban settings, Edmonton Aboriginal women resisted assimilation

by implementing programs based on Aboriginal culture and identity. These women addressed social and economic issues confronting Aboriginal people.

Chapter Three explores the ways in which Edmonton Métis women were integral in the formation of initiatives tending to the needs of the Métis community within urban settings. This chapter contends that while maintaining a strong connection to Métis culture and identity and resisting assimilation, Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann Daniels and Senator Thelma Chalifoux were active in political, social and economic initiatives for Aboriginal people in Edmonton.

Chapter Four illustrates how Aboriginal women in Edmonton saw the discrepancies that existed between the non-Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal community in the City of Edmonton. While resisting assimilation and demanding respect for Aboriginal culture and identity, Lillian Shirt and Muriel Stanley Venne were predominantly active in political, social and economic initiatives. This chapter demonstrates how Aboriginal women addressed concerns related to housing, employment and human rights, primarily focusing on discrimination.

Chapter Five delves into the ways in which Aboriginal women were instrumental within education initiatives in Calgary and Edmonton. Education was increasingly valued by the Aboriginal community; however these women remained determined to retain Aboriginal identity and culture in the urban settings. Aboriginal women in Calgary focused on integrating Aboriginal culture into programs and services for youth, therefore rejecting assimilation. They saw education as important, but also recognized the importance of having Aboriginal content included in the urban curriculum. Bouvier, Carlson, Dempsey and Margetts were active in the grassroots level of addressing these issues.

Community building, leadership, adaptation, cultural retention and identity were central to the initiatives of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women's grassroots activism in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985 included the formation of the *IRIW, VANWS*, and expression of concerns connected to the Métis community. Social and economic issues related to housing, employment, discrimination, education, and youth were also addressed. These women endeavored to secure the needs of future generations, including retention of Aboriginal culture and identity among youth. Using oral history and archival documents, this thesis highlights a part of their story.

CHAPTER ONE

Aboriginal Women Activists in Calgary and Edmonton and the Indian Act: *Indian Rights for Indian Woman*

> At the present time, Indian women are denied the freedom of marriage and should they choose to exercise that right despite section 12 of the Indian Act, she faces exclusion from her home, the deprivation of her rights and most importantly, her identity as an Indian is diminished.
>
> Nellie Carlson, Alberta Committee on Indian Rights for Indian Women

This November 1973 letter from Nellie Carlson on behalf of the *Alberta Committee on Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW)* to the Honourable Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs[1] was one of many requests to the federal government to address the oppressive elements of the *Indian Act.* This chapter focuses on Nellie Carlson and Jenny Margetts, two Alberta women who were central to the formation of the *Alberta Committee of the IRIW,* as well as the national body of the *IRIW.* Christine Daniels was also involved in the work of the *IRIW.* Their goals were to lobby for changes to the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* and educate others on the plight of Aboriginal women. These women faced opposition. Some reasons for opposition were connected to oil and gas resources, potential overcrowding on reserves and fear that changing the *Indian Act* would have a negative impact on treaty rights. The *Indian Act* was amended in 1985 through Bill C-31. These women retained a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity and resisted forced assimilation through the *Indian Act.* They maintained their identity as 'Indian' women and reacted against the *Indian Act* which forced movement from

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[1] Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 23 April 1976: Indian Women and the Indian Act, "Letter from Nellie Carlson, The Alberta Committee on the Indian Rights for Indian Women, to The Honourable Mr. Jean Chretien, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, November 22, 1973," (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada), 1. RG106 Volume 26.

their communities. Despite the portions of the *Indian Act* that deprived them of their Indian identity, they upheld their identities as Indian women.

Carlson, Daniels, and Margetts were all Cree from Saddle Lake Reserve in Alberta. Each of these women moved away from the reserve and lost their status. All of these women were involved in the grassroots formation of the *IRIW*. Nellie Carlson was born on July 3, 1927.[2] She identifies herself as "Cree/Treaty." She was married in 1947 to a man whose mother was "Indian" and whose father was Swedish, which meant that Carlson's husband and their children were non-Status.[3] Carlson explained that she was a "Red Ticket Holder," because she was married and living on the reserve prior to 1951.[4] Carlson removed her name from the band list when she moved off the reserve in 1956, and she regained her status as a result of the 1985 amendment Bill C-31.[5] One of the reasons she chose to move away from the reserve was because her doctor (who was Métis) informed her that she could not actively speak out against *Indian Act* legislation if she was a Status Indian.[6] Carlson was compelled to address the discrimination and discrepancies within the *Indian Act* and therefore chose to move off reserve. Another reason why Carlson and her

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[2] Nellie M. Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[3] Newspaper Clippings, "Committed to Her People," The Edmonton Journal, November 4, 1988 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[4] Red Ticket Holder: "Some Indian agencies had issued prior to 1951 an identity card called a 'Red Ticket' to such women (Indian women who 'married out' prior to 1951 who retained the right to collect annuities and band monies) which identified them as Indians for the purposes of sharing in treaty and band monies." Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law: Citizens Minus (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1978), 61. Indian women who married out prior to 1951 could retain their red ticket status; in 1956 an amendment to the *Indian Act* stopped this practice. Government of Canada, "Perspectives and Realities: Women's Perspectives," (Canada: Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj3_e.html#3.1%20Policy%20Development%20and%20its%20Impact%20on%20First%20Nations%20Women [accessed 3 July 2007].
[5] Carlson, interview, August 2, 2006.
[6] Ibid.

husband moved to Edmonton in 1963 was to tend to her husband's health problems. Carlson's husband was unable to access health services on the reserve.

Christine Daniels (née Whiskeyjack) was a co-founder of the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS)*, where she addressed concerns about treaty women losing their rights when they married non-Treaty men.[7] Daniels used the organizations of the V*ANWS* and the *IRIW* as vehicles of expression.

Jenny Margetts was born on June 14, 1936.[8] She lost her Indian Status in 1960 after marrying a non-Indian man and she regained it in 1985.[9] She moved to Edmonton in 1960 shortly after her marriage.[10] Margetts was co-founder of the *IRIW,*[11] and sought to eliminate gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*, through the *IRIW.*

The *Indian Act* is Canadian federal legislation that was passed in 1876.[12] The *Indian Act* sets out certain federal government obligations and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands, finances, and other resources.[13] It also defines who is an "Indian," and who is not legally defined as an "Indian" (non-Status).[14] Legislation regarding "Indians" prior to 1876 was the basis for the *Indian Act.*[15] Earlier legislation such as the *Gradual Civilization*

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[7] "Let's Meet Christine Daniels," The Native People, April 1971, p.6.
[8] Newspaper Clippings, "Native Women's Champion dies of Cancer at Age 55," The Edmonton Journal, October 21, 1991, p. B4. (Edmonton Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Newspaper Clippings, "Jenny Margetts," The Edmonton Journal, October 3, 2004. (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[12] Government of Canada, "Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004), *Indian Act* http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index_e.html [accessed 16 April 2007].
[13] Government of Canada, "Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004), *Indian Act.*
[14] Sarah Carter, Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14. In 1868, "Indian," was defined as, "All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to a particular tribe, band or body of Indians....and their descendants." Richard A. Bartlett, The Indian Act of Canada (Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan), 11.
[15] Government of Canada, *Indian Act.*

Act of 1857 and the *Enfranchisement Act* of 1869 were amalgamated to form the *Indian Act.*[16] The 1857 Act stated that any Indian male who was debt-free, literate and of good moral character, could be granted fifty acres of reserve land and would then be enfranchised.[17] The 1857 Act explicitly declared assimilation of "Indians" as a goal.[18] The 1869 legislation increased government control on reserves, thereby severely limiting Aboriginal self-governance.[19] Historian Olive Patricia Dickason contended that consistently since 1876, the main purpose of the *Indian Act* was assimilation.[20] Amendments made from 1879 to 1884 reinforced the goal of civilizing "Indians"; "model farms" and industrial schools were established to teach agricultural techniques or mechanical trades.[21] In 1884, ceremonies, including the Potlatch were banned; further prohibitions of traditional dance and customs were established in 1895, 1914, and 1933.[22] Amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951 lifted the ban on cultural prohibitions and reduced government control on reserves, but assimilation remained a goal.[23] Those who were not recognized as "Indian" under the

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[16] Carter, 115.
[17] Carter, 117. Jamieson described enfranchisement, "...assimilation to Euro-Canadian culture should be the ultimate goal for Indians. This goal was perceived as a privilege only to be conferred by the superior society on the Indians when they had achieved certain standards of civilized behaviour. Maintaining the Indian in a state of 'wardship' without legal rights until he or she had 'progressed' sufficiently to be made a full citizen (i.e. enfranchised)." Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus, 63.
A 1956 *Indian Act* Amendment targeted children stipulating that children of women who married out were enfranchised; a woman's off-reserve children would 'usually' be enfranchised. John Giokas and Robert K. Groves, "Collective and Individual Recognition in Canada: The *Indian Act* Regime," in Who Are Canada's Aboriginal Peoples?: Recognition, Definition and Jurisdiction, ed. Paul L.A.H. Chartrand (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: John Giokas and Robert K. Groves, 2002), 58.
[18] In 1857, "Indian Tribes" were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Indian Affairs in the "Province of Canada". Bartlett, 3-4.
[19] Carter, 116.
[20] Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 263.
[21] Government of Canada, The Historical Development of the Indian Act 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, P.R.E. Group, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 72.
[22] Bartlett, 5.
[23] Ibid.

Indian Act, were legally denied access to their rights rooted in government commitments.[24] Despite the oppressive elements of the *Indian Act*, federal financial and treaty obligations were included within the legislation.[25] This is one of the main reasons why the *Indian Act* has been a contentious issue. This is why Aboriginal women were resolute that their inherent rights be recognized rather than be dissolved through discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act.*

Aboriginal people are also classified in their relationship to the federal government. "Status Indians" are defined as

> people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register[26], an official list maintained by the federal government...only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the *Indian Act,* which defines an Indian as 'a person who pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.' Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.[27]

"Non-Status Indians" are "people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the *Indian Act*, either because they are unable to have proved their status or have lost their status rights."[28] A "Treaty Indian" is "a Status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown."[29]

The *Indian Act* discriminated against Aboriginal women and their freedom to marry whomever they chose. Starting in 1869 (section 6), if an "Indian" woman chose to "marry

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[24] Bartlett, 23-27.
[25] Government of Canada, "Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," *Indian Act.*
[26] "The Indian Register is the official record identifying all Status Indians in Canada. Status Indians are people who are registered with the federal government as Indians, according to the terms of the *Indian Act.* Status Indians have certain rights and benefits not available to Non-Status Indians and Métis people. These may include on-reserve housing benefits, education and exemption from federal, provincial and territorial taxes in specific situations." The Government of Canada, "The Indian Register," (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tir_e.html [accessed 1 July 2007].
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

out" (marry a man who was not an 'Indian'), she would lose her "Indian Status."[30] The section read, "...Any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian or a non-treaty Indian shall cease to be an Indian in any respect within the meaning of this Act."[31] From 1869 to 1951 this portion of the Act underwent minor revisions. One of the mainstays of the Act was a portion that read (1927), "she shall be entitled to share equally with the members of the band to which she formerly belonged, in the annual or semi-annual distribution of their annuities, interest monies and rents; but such income may be commuted to her at anytime at ten years' purchase."[32] This meant that if the woman was Treaty or belonged to a band that collected rent from a third party that leased portion of the reserve land, she would be eligible to receive those funds. However, in 1951, the legislation was altered; section 12 (1) (b) read "the following persons are not entitled to be registered, namely a woman who is married to a person who is not an Indian."[33] An Indian woman who "married out," or married a man who was not "Indian" (or did not have Indian status), was no longer registered and no longer recognized as an "Indian" under the *Indian Act.*

Kathleen Jamieson outlined further elements of the *Indian Act* that discriminated against Aboriginal women:

> ...The woman, on marriage must leave her parents' home and her reserve. She may not own property on the reserve and must dispose of any property she does hold. She may be prevented from inheriting property left to her by her parents. She cannot take any further part in band business. Her children are not recognized as Indian and are therefore denied access to cultural and social amenities of the Indian community. And most punitive of all, she may be prevented from returning to live with her family on the reserve, even if she is in dire need, very ill, a widow,

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[30] Sharon Helen Venne, Indian Act and Amendments, 1868-1975: An Indexed Collection (Saksatchewan: University of Saskatchewan Native Law Centre, 1981), 12.
[31] Venne, 12.
[32] Ibid., 249.
[33] Ibid., 319.

> divorced or separated. Finally, her body may not be buried on the reserve with those of her forebearers.[34]

Alberta Aboriginal women rallied against these discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act*, which were amended in 1985.

Indian Rights for Indian Women was formed following the 1968 First Alberta Native Women's Conference in Edmonton.[35] This conference, organized by the Voice of Native Women of Alberta, was one of the first forums for expression of discrimination against Native women.[36] Some of the main conference addresses were "The Role of Native Women," by Mary Anne Lavallee, "Challenges Facing Native Women Today," by Alice Mustos, and "Challenges Facing Métis Women," by Clara Yellowknee.[37] This was a unifying event that highlighted political, social, and economic issues that affected Aboriginal women. This conference was not the main catalyst in the formation of the *IRIW,* however, the conference sparked further organization and unity for women at the grassroots level of political voice.

In 1969, Mary Two-Axe Early, a Mohawk from Kahnawake, Quebec, was at the grassroots in the founding of "Equal Rights for Indian Women," an organization dedicated to addressing the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act.*[38] This was the precursor to the formation to the *IRIW.* One catalyst was the Jeanette Lavell case which was initiated in

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[34] Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law: Citizens Minus, 1.
[35] Kathleen Jamieson, "Multiple Jeopardy: The Evolution of A Native Women's Movement," Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal 2, no.2 (Spring 1979): 164.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ralph G. Steinhauer Fonds, "Report of the First Alberta Native Women's Conference, Mayfair Hotel, Edmonton, March 12-15, 1968," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7934 Box 5 File # 46.
[38] Mary Two-Axe Early, "Indian Rights for Indian Women," in Women, Feminism and Development, eds. Huguette Dagenais et. al. (Montreal: The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1994), 432.

1970 and lasted until 1973.[39] She was an Ojibwa woman who had married a non-Indian, and who challenged the deletion of her name from the band list.[40] Lavell was joined in her case by Yvonne Bedard, a Six Nations woman who lost her Indian Status upon marrying out but who had subsequently separated from her husband. She was fighting the Six Nations band council's attempts to evict her from the reserve and from the house that had been willed to her by her mother.[41] These two cases prompted Alberta Aboriginal women's involvement.[42] One report illuminated the extent to which Aboriginal women and children were affected by the legislation: "Since the women launched their fight to retain their status, some 6,000 women [in Canada] and children who would have lost their status remained on the Indian rolls pending the court decision. Under the high court judgment, all now will be considered non-Indians."[43] The status of 6,000 women and children was pending from the onset of the court case to the court decision. Aboriginal women across Canada lobbied persistently against the *Indian Act.* In 1981, Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet woman who lost her status and band membership when she married a non-Indian man, challenged the Canadian government through the United Nations Committee on Human Rights.[44] Lovelace won her case, and the Human Rights Committee found the government of Canada in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which concluded that section 12 (1) (b) of *Indian Act* was sexually discriminatory; this section was amended in 1985.[45]

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[39] Jamieson, "Multiple Jeopardy," 166.
[40] Jamieson, "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act," 126.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Jamieson, "Multiple Jeopardy," 168.
[43] "Lavell Loses Status Case," The Native People, 31 August 1973.
[44] Cora J. Voyageur, "Contemporary Aboriginal Women in Canada," in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, 2nd ed. Eds. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), 92.
[45] Ibid.

Aboriginal women increasingly articulated their concerns about the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act*. In 1971, in Edmonton, dissatisfaction was expressed and signed by "A Concerned Indian Woman," Christine Daniels, who wrote to the Registrar of the Community Affairs Branch at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development stating: "I feel that my rights and status as an Indian has been tampered [with] to a point where further discussion is necessary at this stage."[46] She also wrote to Ken R.H. Paprowski M.D., M.L.A. (Alberta), on June 15, 1972 describing the formation of "Indian Rights for Indian Women." She explained that one of the mandates of the *IRIW* was to support the Jeannette Lavell case.[47] The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that section 12 (1) (b) of the *Indian Act* did not discriminate against women, regardless of the fact that Indian women who married non-Status men lost their status.[48] Indian men did not lose their status when they married non-Status women, and moreover, non-Status or non-Aboriginal women who married Status men gained Status.[49] The 1973 Supreme Court of Canada ruling against Lavell resulted in an upsurge of Aboriginal political activism, in particular, in the formation of the *IRIW*.[50]

Lillian Shirt, also from Saddle Lake, Alberta, and sister of Jenny Margetts,[51] reflected on some of the ways in which Aboriginal women were affected by the *Indian Act*.

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[46] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Letter from Christine Daniels to Mr. H.H. Chapman, The Registrar, Community Affairs, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, October 29, 1971," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991) PR 1999.465 Box 9 File 79.

[47] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Letter from Christine Daniels, Co-Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee , Indian Rights for Indian Women, to Dr. Ken R.H. Paprowski, M.D., M.L.A., June 15, 1972," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991): 1-2. PR1999.465 File 79.

[48] Rebick, 107.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Kathleen Jamieson, "Multiple Jeopardy: The Evolution of a Native Women's Movement," Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal 2, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 166.

[51] Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006. Shirt (née Piche) was born March 2, 1940. She resided in Edmonton, Alberta from 1954 when she went to Charles Camsell Hospital, and continued education in Edmonton. She currently makes Edmonton her home.

She remembered the pain and impact that the *Indian Act* had on her at the personal level. Shirt also described her sister, Jenny Margett's ensuing involvement in the *IRIW:*

> ...we could not go back to the reserve, if the woman married, we were not an Indian, if we married a white man. And that was, unjust also. So, she registered an organization called 'Indian Rights for Indian Women'...At that time, my sister Ursula, had two children, had just had a miscarriage, got chased off the reserve...And my dad cried. And I remember my dad looking at my sister Ursula and her family in the wagon...the team of horses pulling this cow and rope and a couple of horses and a rope. And my dad standing at the window...'Ah-hu-ya!!...'and he held...he put his hand to his heart, he said, 'It hurts'.[52]

A number of Aboriginal women activists in Alberta were determined to protest the decision in the Lavell case. Part of their activities were devoted to educating other Aboriginal people, as well as other members of Canadian society about the issues surrounding the *Indian Act*. In January 1973, a newsletter authored by Margetts explained that the *Alberta Committee of IRIW* was to conduct a workshop to promote understanding of the *Indian Act* and the Canadian Bill of Rights.[53] She hoped that women in other provinces would commit to similar approaches to educate the public on the injustices of the *Indian Act* toward Indian women.[54] At the University of Calgary, in 1972, a panel was organized that included Margetts, Jeanette Lavell, and Philamene *[sic]* Ross along with two status women who opposed their views.[55] This form of grassroots activism was very much a priority in Alberta, as Margetts explained, "I strongly recommended this kind of exposure

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[52] Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[53] Canadian Bill of Rights was introduced in 1960 under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, "It recognizes the rights of individuals to life, liberty, personal security and enjoyment...It protects rights to equality before the law and ensures protection of the law; protects the freedoms of religion, speech, assembly and association, and the press; and legal rights such as the rights to counsel and 'fair hearing'. Historica Foundation of Canada, "The Bill of Rights," (2007). http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0001264 [accessed 20 July 2007].
[54] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Plans for National Committee on Indian Rights for Indian Women: Newsletter, January 15, 1973" (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991): 1, 2. 1999.465 Box 9 File 82 (2 of 2)
[55] Ibid.

before the Supreme Court hearing in April...Strong action is definitely needed to make the government aware of this injustice done to Indian women."[56]

Carlson reflected on the time frame and circumstances around the Lavell case, describing how and why Aboriginal women in Alberta became involved:

> Then somebody phoned us, and asked us, could we, in Alberta support her [Lavell]. There was a conference in Saskatoon, and she was there and she spoke wise...So, Jenny, the late Jenny Margetts, she's from Saddle Lake, too. We all got together, for those of us who had married off the reserve...Then we formed an organization called *Indian Rights for Indian Women*...there were fifteen of us that were really determined in the Alberta committee. We registered the organization, and we went and we supported the Supreme Court case, Jeanette's case, Jeannette Lavell's case. In 1973, we lost. But, Bora Laskin, the Chief Justice, said, 'thus, it's up to parliament to change this Act." And so, again, we started all over again and we lobbied the government...for seventeen years we lobbied.[57]

Through their involvement in the *IRIW* and the ensuing activities, Carlson, Margetts, and Daniels helped carry a message to the government of Canada, asserting that Indian women and their intrinsic rights as Indian people could not be overlooked.

On October 22, 1973, Aboriginal women staged a demonstration in front of the legislative buildings in Edmonton to protest the Lavell decision.[58] This peaceful and brief demonstration was one among many that took place simultaneously across Canada in reaction to the Lavell decision.[59] However, there was much more to this demonstration than met the eye. The message was clear: Aboriginal women demanded equality, not only as women, but as Aboriginal people and as Aboriginal women. The Native People[60] explained the motive for this action: "Canadian women can be and are being legally discriminated against. The demonstration was labeled as a day of mourning in reference to the Canadian

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Nellie M. Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[58] "Lavell Supporters Demonstrate," The Native People, 26 October, 1973.
[59] Ibid. The article did not specify the number of protestors.
[60] The Native People is a publication by the Alberta Native Communications Society.

Bill of Rights which until the August 27th decision assured equality before the law as a right belonging to all Canadians."[61] The fact that the Bill of Rights and the promises it contained failed to ensure Aboriginal women's equality before the law demonstrated a weakness of the Bill. Some demonstrators wore black to signify the mourning of their treaty rights.[62] Carlson, who was a prominent figure at this demonstration, once again pledged her determination to continue the fight against the *Indian Act*.[63]

This demonstration illustrated how Indian women expressed their grievances not only as "women," but as "Indian women." It was because Lavell was an Aboriginal woman that she was in court and as an Aboriginal woman, Lavell was not recognized as equal before the law. Some would contend that some Aboriginal women, including those who took part in the demonstration could be classified as 'second wave feminists', meaning that these women sought to rectify inequalities through law.[64] However, scholar Mary-Ellen Turpel argues that the Royal Commission of the Status of Women,[65] a report that outlined "second-wave" Canadian feminist concerns, did not address issues culturally and conceptually specific to the needs of Aboriginal women.[66] Some scholars, such as Grace Ouellette assert that feminism and Aboriginal women's activism are different. Ouellette contends that most Aboriginal women embrace their roles as childbearers, nurturers, and

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[61] "Lavell Supporters Demonstrate," The Native People, 26 October, 1973.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Second wave feminism also addressed ongoing issues connected to discrimination in the workforce, education, and professional training. Deborah Gorham, "Feminism: Second-Wave," in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History, ed. Gerald Hallowell (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004), 219.
[65] Instituted by Lester B. Pearson in 1967, the commission began in 1968 (hearings were held across Canada); the result was 167 recommendations related to equality, maternity leave, day care, birth control, family law, the *Indian Act,* education, and employment. Historica Foundation of Canada, "Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada," (2007) http://www.thecanadianencyclopeida.com/indexcfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0007674
[66] Mary Ellen Turpel, "Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Legacy of the Canadian State For First Nations Women," 6, no. 2 (1993): 175.

caregivers (which some feminist concepts reject or oppose).[67] Ouellette explains that Aboriginal women also reacted against Eurocentric values embedded in the *Indian Act.*[68] Yet, another Aboriginal view of second wave feminism is illustrated through a conversation between a Mohawk community leader, Sylvia Maracle, and her grandmother.[69] Maracle described the conversation that she had with her grandmother while visiting her community from university in 1973:

> My grandmother had never been to school and was curious to know what I was learning. She had some seventy-grandchildren and another thirty-two great-grandchildren, and at that point, I was the only one who had gone to university. As she was one of the most magnificent people I knew, I wanted to prove that I was worthy of her question. I responded by saying that I was learning about women's liberation, I replied that women wanted to be equal with their men. It was about equality, I thought. But, when my grandfather translated these notions into Mohawk, my grandmother started laughing. She said something in Mohawk, and when I asked my grandfather to translate, he told me that her exact words were, 'Why would women want to lower themselves to be equal to men?'[70]

So, demonstrations by "Indian" women such as Carlson or Lavell could be perceived as reactions against "inequality" or as reactions to the intrusion of colonial patriarchal values that dictated their way of life and identity.

The plight of the women of *IRIW* gained media attention in different forms. In April 1975, Margetts, the western chairwoman for the *IRIW,* was profiled in *Chatelaine* Magazine. The article highlighted her determination to carry on: "Sometimes, I get very tired. But I can't quit at this stage."[71] She wanted to defend those who were unable to

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[67] Grace J.M.W. Ouellette, The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, c2002), 89-90.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Sylvia Maracle, "The Eagle Has Landed: Native Women, Leadership, and Community Development," in Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival, eds. Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 263, 74.
[70] Maracle, 74.
[71] Newspaper Clippings, "Jenny Margetts: Rights for Indian Women," Chatelaine April 1975 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).

defend themselves, "Several hundred illegitimate native children have been placed under the trusteeship of the provincial government. They've been enfranchised. That means they've lost their treaty status. The question I ask is, 'Who is looking after their rights?'"[72]

An Edmonton Journal article from 1975 entitled, "The Battle Continues," outlined and reinforced Carlson's position that "united not a divided Indian people," was needed.[73] She explained that the *IRIW* membership wanted to be consulted about changes to the *Indian Act*, and she declared, "we know where we stand."[74]

These women pursued many opportunities to educate others. Margetts spoke at a four day Native Land Claims conference at the University of Alberta from March 22-25, 1977. She stressed her Aboriginal identity despite the fact that *Indian Act* legislation did not recognize her as an "Indian". As reported in The Native People, "Married to a non-Native, Mrs. Margetts refuses to consider herself and women like her as anything other than Indians in spite of enfranchisement regulations."[75] She explained that there was on-going lobbying with federal ministers. Margetts also asserted that the issue of Aboriginal women and their children needed to be addressed before land claims were pursued.[76]

In November, 1977, Margetts requested federal funding to allow *IRIW* to undertake a national research project regarding Aboriginal women's rights to be considered in revisions to the *Indian Act*.[77] She also expressed a hope that if the funding were to materialize, it be used for historical, ethnographic, and sociological data on Native

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Newspaper Clippings, "The Battle Continues," The Edmonton Journal, July 15, 1975 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004)
[74] Ibid.
[75] "Native Woman's Rights," The Native People April 1, 1977.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Newspaper Clippings, "Native Women's Rights, Status 'Not Ignored," The Edmonton Journal, July 15, 1975 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).

women's rights.[78] The Native People published an article describing a *National Indian Rights for Indian Women* research workshop in April 1978, in St. Albert, Alberta.[79] Twenty-nine women from across Canada attended this workshop to discuss issues surrounding the status of Indian women, their spouses and their children.[80] This research by the *IRIW* and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women resulted in a book called Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus by Kathleen Jamieson.[81]

In November 1978, the *IRIW* held their fifth annual conference in Edmonton. Sixty delegates attended this conference from the western Prairie provinces. Margetts was interviewed by The Native People and she explained the main focus of the conference was revisions to the *Indian Act:*

> We are told that the government recognizes the injustices of the present situation and that they are prepared to make changes. But what changes? Now is the time to put on the pressures to make sure that the changes made are ones that will meet our needs and help eliminate discrimination. Our children cannot be deprived of their heritage and inheritance. They deserve a promising future and only we can make it happen for them.[82]

These women were now exploring possibilities for revisions to the *Indian Act,* moving beyond the argument that "there needs to be changes," to "here are what we suggest the changes need to be". Margetts strongly recommended unity among Aboriginal people. Margetts sought more open-minded communication, as her group had approached reserve communities in Alberta to hold informational and consultative meetings, but permission was denied.[83] The delegates left this conference with a determination to be involved in the

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[78] Ibid.
[79] "A.N.C.S. Students...Indian Rights for Indian Women," The Native People, April 21, 1978.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "Revision of the Indian Act IRIW's Priority," The Native People, November 10, 1978.
[83] Ibid.

consultative process and to continue lobbying for changes to the *Indian Act,* and to work toward the well-being of future generations.[84]

In December 1978, the federal government[85] announced a working paper to reform discriminatory elements of the Indian Act. The most important of the proposed reforms was, "that an Indian woman who marries a non-Indian should not lose their *[sic]* treaty status."[86] But, the activists wanted to see further change. Women who lobbied for changes requested retroactivity, allowing Aboriginal women and their children to regain status if they had already lost it. The government balked at this suggestion, explaining that there was a shortage of Indian lands and there would be cost issues related to increases of status Indians.[87] Furthermore, it was feared that retroactivity would bring potential practical difficulties, further inequities, and that it would set a precedent for demands from other groups.[88] In 1979, the *IRIW* response to the minister's discussion paper[89] clearly identified the areas in which the proposals fell short. In particular, the National Committee of *IRIW* specified that their suggestions were ignored: "the majority of our suggestions, as contained in our brief presented to the Minister in June 1978, have been totally ignored or only partially incorporated into the proposed revisions. Our greatest disappointment is with the Government's apparent rejection of any concept of retroactivity."[90] A 1979 *IRIW* "Open Letter to the Prime Minister," from Edmonton, outlined objection to the proposals, and

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[84] Ibid.
[85] In December 1978, Pierre Elliot Trudeau (Liberals) was the Prime Minster of Canada. Gerald Hallowell, ed The Oxford Companion to Canadian History (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004), 697. The article did not specify which branch of the federal government was responsible for the working paper.
[86] "Indian Act Changes-A Glee to Indian Women," The Native People, December 1, 1978.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Indian Act Revision: Response to Minister's Discussion Paper: Membership, by Indian Rights for Indian Women, January 18, 1979," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991): 1. 1999.465 File 239.
[89] The minister's discussion paper [Minister of Indian Affairs] was a paper on the proposed changes to the membership section of the Indian Act. Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

expressed discontent with the government's inability to address some of the concerns that the *IRIW* outlined prior to the announcement of the working paper. They remained adamant that women who lost their status be reinstated, retroactively.[91] The letter also demanded that organizations such as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB)[92] not be recognized as representing the views of Aboriginal women.[93] The issue of organizations such as the NIB and other Aboriginal organizations in relation to the *IRIW* will be discussed in more depth later in the thesis.

In 1981, the federal government under Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau and the Liberals was preparing for repatriation of the Constitution, which included the installation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.[94] Aboriginal people sought recognition of Aboriginal rights in the Constitution, especially in relation to treaties.[95] Throughout 1981 and 1982, Aboriginal groups worked to protect their rights in the Constitution Act of 1982; they succeeded.[96] The 1982 Constitution read, "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."[97] In 1981, Aboriginal women also had vested interest in the constitution. Lillianne E. Krosebrink-Gellison explained that Aboriginal women were entrenched in the conflict because of the

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[91] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Open Letter to the Prime Minister, from the *Indian Rights for Indian Women* Edmonton, Alberta, October 12, 1979," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991): 1, 3. 1999.465 File 239.
[92] See Chapter One-page two for explanation of the National Indian Brotherhood.
[93] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Open Letter to the Prime Minister, from the *Indian Rights for Indian Women* Edmonton, Alberta, October 12, 1979," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1924-1991): 1, 3. 1999.465 File 239.
[94] Peter McFarlane, "Aboriginal Leadership," in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, ed. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt and Brace Canada, 2000), 75.
[95] Ibid., 75.
[96] Miller, 350.
[97] Ibid., 350.

difficulty in creating a balance between their rights as Aboriginal people and as women.[98] The *IRIW* was fully aware that Aboriginal women needed to participate in the constitutional debates.

In1981 the *IRIW* held a conference in St. Albert called, "Native Women and the Constitution." Margetts, the president of the *IRIW,* explained, "at the present time, the Canadian Parliament is debating the resolution that would bring home the constitution which contains several provisions of great importance to Native women...If the viewpoint of Native women is to have significance, then we have to take part in the planning and active participation in amending the Bill."[99] The delegates at this conference also expressed their regret over the opposition of various organizations, and the inability of the government to acknowledge their input in the revision process.[100] Their grievances now included a new dimension; along with a shift from a focus on revisions to the *Indian Act* was an added focus for inclusion of the rights of Aboriginal women in the constitutional process. The bottom line was that Aboriginal rights be recognized and affirmed, yet, in the eyes of the federal government, many Aboriginal women and their families were still not considered "Indian" under the *Indian Act.* Therefore, the Aboriginal rights for these women and their families were not secure.

The first outward opposition to Aboriginal women and their efforts to change the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* was the ruling against Lavell and Bedard in 1973 in the Supreme Court of Canada. The Alberta women of the *IRIW* thereafter, faced a tremendous amount of opposition. As Aboriginal women became more vocal about their

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[98] Lilianne E. Krosenbrink-Gelissen, "The Canadian Constitution, the Charter, and Aboriginal Women's Rights: Conflicts and Dilemmas," International Journal of Canadian Studies 7, no. 8 (1993): 208.
[99] "Women Against Patriation," The Native People March 21, 1981, p. 1.
[100] Ibid.

grievances, they began to face opposition from Aboriginal organizations such as the Native Indian Brotherhood, the Indian Association of Alberta, as well as the federal government. One of the reasons why Aboriginal organizations opposed changes to the *Indian Act* was because of the events surrounding the1969 White Paper,[101] which, if accepted, would have resulted in loss of land and Aboriginal rights.[102] Aboriginal people across Canada reacted to the White Paper, because it meant not only termination of the *Indian Act,* but all Aboriginal rights. Jamieson aptly characterizes this conflict as "rights of all Indians against the rights of a minority of Indians, i.e. Indian women."[103] It is evident that Aboriginal groups also feared the take over of lands by non-Indian husbands and an increase of economic disparity connected to potential increases of populations on the reserves. The opposition of the government to increasing the numbers of Status/Treaty Aboriginal people dated back to the turn of the century. From the turn of the twentieth century, the Canadian government along with European settlers pressured Aboriginal people to surrender their reserve lands, in particular the more fertile areas.[104] Otherwise, opposition from the Canadian government resulted from attempts to appease some of the male-dominated Aboriginal organizations as well as to lessen the economic responsibilities attached to an increase of status Indians. As Jamieson observes, "The opposition of Indian leaders to the claim of Lavell became a matter of policy to be pursued at all cost by government and Indians together because it

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[101] Formally, the White Paper is called the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969,* "On June 24, 1969, the government flew Native leaders to Ottawa, and Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs) told them that he would present a major policy paper to the House the next day but gave them no details about his impending announcement. On June 25 they listened in stunned silence from the House of Commons galleries as Chrétien delivered the now-infamous 1969 White Paper on Indian policy, in which the Trudeau government pledged to repeal the Indian Act and replace it with a land act, terminate treaties, and eliminate the Indian Affairs department in five years." Arthur J. Ray, I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005): 334.

[102] Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus 77.

[103] Ibid., 2.

[104] Ibid., 49.

endangered the *Indian Act.*"[105] The opposition to Aboriginal women activists was rooted in complex Aboriginal relations with the government stemming from circumstances such as the conflict connected to the "White Paper".

Aboriginal leaders such as Indian Association of Alberta president, Harold Cardinal rejected the idea of change within the *Indian Act,* writing in 1969 that, "We do not want the Indian Act retained because it is a good piece of legislation, it isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But, it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be....We would rather continue to live in bondage under the *Indian Act* than surrender our sacred rights."[106] The *Indian Act* was viewed as a way to secure Aboriginal rights, regardless of some of the oppressive elements within the legislation.[107] Although the *Indian Act* was patriarchal and oppressive, many male Aboriginal leaders viewed the *Indian Act* as a legal recognition of the special and distinct status of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal leaders did not want to revisit a situation that they successfully laid to rest in 1970; the 1969 White Paper.[108] However, Aboriginal women saw the need for the Canadian Government to recognize *all* Aboriginal people as "Indians" under the *Indian Act.*

In a 1975 interview with the Edmonton Journal, Carlson, then head of the Alberta *IRIW* described the conflict that was created as a result of Aboriginal women's activism surrounding the *Indian Act:*

> We have taken a lot of persecution and a lot of threats. We have been told, 'you knew what you were doing'. We have been asked: 'why don't you get a divorce?' Surely Indian women should have the right to choose whom they will marry without penalty just as other people have-just as Indian men do...One of the arguments used

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[105] Ibid., 2.
[106] Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus 2.
[107] Ibid.
[108] After much resistance and reaction from Native groups; the federal government withdrew the White Paper in 1970. Ray, 332, 336.

> against them across Canada is that restoring their land rights would mean an invasion of Indian reserves by their white husbands eager to gain control of the land. The fact is that only 25 percent of the women are married to whites and the committee passed a resolution to exclude their husbands from gaining treaty rights or Indian land, and passed it unanimously.[109]

Carlson stressed that she was not expressing her concerns about the *Indian Act* to create animosity and division; rather she wanted to see a united Aboriginal people.

Carlson reflected on her experiences during this period of conflict. She described some of the ways in which this situation affected her life, "We were followed everywhere, our phones were tapped, our mail was confiscated, our lives were threatened, simply because we said, 'We are Indian women of Canada and we lost the rights that we were rightfully born with.' That was the punishment we received."[110] Despite these threats and incidents, Aboriginal women like Carlson remained firm in their stance against the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act.*

Consequences of the conflict affected Aboriginal women at different levels and to varying degrees. This was demonstrated in an interview with Shirt. Shirt reflected on her memories of her sister, Jenny Margetts, how Margetts became involved in the activism and the ensuing consequences. Shirt explained:

> [We] wouldn't even get services on the reserve...The services they gave were for band members on the reserve. Then I was asked to leave the reserve...I'm treaty status with children, I was asked to leave the reserve...Because my sister had registered *[sic]* Indian Rights for Indian Women already. And, the chiefs were becoming quite annoyed, and quite paranoid about the women speaking. So, I [have] never gone back.[111]

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[109] Newspaper Clippings, "The Battle Continues," The Edmonton Journal, July 15, 1975 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[110] Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[111] Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006.

Shirt and Margetts' experiences demonstrate how some Aboriginal women were alienated from their communities as a result of vocalizing their grievances.

An April1978 article in The Native People outlined some of the opposition expressed by male Aboriginal leaders, particularly in Alberta. Joe Dion, one of the founders of the NIB,[112] explained that his rationale for opposing Aboriginal women was a fear of government reaction: "the government will just state that they cannot afford to accommodate that many people," and commented that in 1977 Aboriginal people suffered a seventy million dollar cutback, and that he feared that the government's bottom line would be, "we simply can't afford it'."[113] In a separate interview in 1979[114], Dion, then president of the IAA, explained that he wanted the government to deal with the question of Indian rights before women's rights. It appears that at least in this case, Aboriginal leaders, like Dion, were not opposed to the idea of Aboriginal women's rights, but were concerned with Aboriginal women's rights taking priority over Aboriginal rights.

Despite opposition, Aboriginal women activists in Alberta continued to be very vocal in placing their protests before the public. Margetts described some of the consequences Aboriginal women in Alberta faced as a result of the *Indian Act*:

> There are lots of women on skid road here [Edmonton] who are here because of the Indian Act...They're not welcome back on the reserve even after they are widowed or divorced. I haven't found one reserve that's really flexible in Alberta. They take a really hard stand...Indian women in Alberta are really at the bottom of the political scale.[115]

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[112] Anthony J. Hall, The American Empire and the Fourth World (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, c. 2003), 280.
[113] "Indian Ladies Run Into Brick Wall," The Native People April 14, 1978, page 4.
[114] "Fight Over Native Women's Rights Continue," The Native People September 28, 1979, page 2.
[115] Newspaper Clippings, "Indian Women's Fight Continues in Alberta," The Edmonton Journal July 28, 1978 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).

This Edmonton Journal article further explained the opposition of Aboriginal leaders in Alberta. They were worried about an influx of women and their non-Aboriginal husbands returning to the reserves and sharing in the band resources which often included oil and gas resources.[116] Aboriginal people residing on reserves in which oil and gas revenue were part of treaty agreements were paid dividends from the resources. When the population on the reserves increased, the dividends decreased. Margetts explained that while male Aboriginal leaders across Canada shifted in their attitude and slowly began to support the women in their battle, conflict was still very much evident, especially in Alberta.[117]

Fear connected to the sharing of oil and gas resources in Alberta was outlined in The Native People. The article quoted Alberta's provincial Native Affairs Minister, Don McCrimmon in 1981: "Alberta Indian bands will raise a 'major hue and cry' if Ottawa forces them to reinstate non-status women...If this came into effect, it would be quite a blow to some bands,' referring to the oil-rich Natives in central and southern Alberta.[118] This article illustrated why some Aboriginal groups in Alberta resisted change, but it also showed why the Alberta provincial government balked at the possibility of changes in the *Indian Act*. The provincial government was concerned that Aboriginal groups in Alberta were going to react against changes to the *Indian Act* for reasons connected to economics and resources. There was a fear of unrest among Aboriginal groups within the province of Alberta which would affect Aboriginal/government relations. As a result the Alberta government was reluctant to support changes. Economic concerns were a large part of the

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] "Native Women's Rights," The Native People, October 9, 1981, page 2.

reason why the Alberta government and some Aboriginal groups challenged the grievances of Aboriginal women.

Opposition also came from other Aboriginal women. Treaty women from a group called the "Advisory Council of Treaty Women," (ACTW)[119] insisted "that the committee on Indian Rights for Indian women does not reflect the sentiments of the vast majority of Indian people."[120] In a 1980 article in The Native People it was reported that, "The IRIW has never claimed to represent the views of the majority of the 350,000 Treaty Indians. However, there are 750,000 non-Status and Métis whose sentiments the IRIW does reflect."[121]

In the years following the 1973 rulings against Lavell and Bedard, Aboriginal women in the *Alberta Committee of the IRIW* and the national level of the *IRIW,* were consumed with attempts to change the *Indian Act*. Their efforts proved fruitful, and they, along with Aboriginal women from other parts of Canada began to see light at the end of the tunnel in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite opposition from many directions, these women began to see a shift toward more support for their cause.

In May 1984, Margetts, president of the *IRIW* declared "It's a dark hour in the history of our native people."[122] She was referring to the fact that Aboriginal women would not be able to argue their case at an Edmonton conference of Indian leaders from across Canada.[123] The three day conference hosted about 570 chiefs from across Canada.[124]

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[119] The ACTW, formed in 1980 was a version of the earlier organization *VANWS,* and represented a voice of Treaty women in Alberta. "IRIW and Treaty Women Disagree," The Native People June 20, 1980, page 7.
[120] "IRIW and Treaty Women Disagree," The Native People, June 20, 1980, page 7.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Newspaper Clippings, "Chief's Stand Divides Native Women," The Edmonton Journal May 16, 1984 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

Although the "women's rights question" was first on the agenda, the Aboriginal women were not afforded an opportunity to present their perspectives.[125] Margetts concluded her interview by stating, "We are on the outside looking in...But, we are still Indians."[126]

In 1984, Bill C-47 was introduced by Indian Affairs Minister John Munro. It was intended to end sexual discrimination in the Indian Act and extend status to individuals who were previously excluded through membership rules in the *Indian Act.*[127] Legal scholar Douglas Sanders explained that the bill was blocked in June 1984, when four senators refused unanimous consent needed for the bill to proceed through Senate in one day. Less than an hour later, Parliament adjourned for the summer, and the bill died with the announcement of a general election.[128] In her interview, Carlson commented on Bill C-47 and the eventual disappointment, "And so, we lost again....we were sad again."[129] However, a year later, Aboriginal women all over Canada, including the Alberta Aboriginal women who were at the grassroots level of the *IRIW* witnessed an amendment to the *Indian Act:* Bill C-31.

On the eve of change, on June 12, 1985, Kay Anderson, one of the 16,000 Aboriginal women in Alberta who would regain her status with the amendment to the *Indian Act,* was interviewed by the Edmonton Journal.[130] She described the challenges that she faced as a result of marrying a non-Aboriginal man in 1965, which included receiving a

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Douglas Sanders, "Indian Status: A Women's Issue or an Indian Issue?" Canadian Native Law Reporter 3 (1984): 30.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[130] Newspaper Clippings, "Non-Status Women Speak Out," The Edmonton Journal, June 12, 1985 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).

formal letter in the mail telling her she was no longer "Indian".[131] Anderson proceeded to share the stark difference between her experiences and the experiences of her brother who married a non-Aboriginal woman and later a non-Status Aboriginal woman. Her brother was able to leave and return to the reserve at will, he was able to vote, hunt, fish, and had a home on the reserve and in Edmonton.[132] Anderson predicted, that the pending changes would mean, "we cannot be labeled to be no longer Indian."[133]

On June 28, 1985, Bill C-31 was passed to end sexual discrimination in the *Indian Act.* It also eliminated enfranchisement,[134] provided for the re-instatement of women who lost their status, and gave power to the bands for the first time since Confederation to formulate and administer their own membership codes.[135]

Carlson, Daniels, and Margetts were among many women across Canada active at the grassroots level of the *IRIW.* These women were unremitting in their efforts to put an end to the oppressive and discriminatory *Indian Act.* Their activism took the form of lobbying and educating others about the discrimination in the *Act*. Opposition from other Aboriginal groups and the government had long-standing consequences. Lillian Shirt, for example, chose not to go back to her home community. In 1985, Bill C-31 was passed to end sexual discrimination in the *Indian Act.* This thesis and its examination of the lives of these women provides a brief glimpse of how the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* sparked the grassroots activism of Aboriginal women and their attempts to secure the well-being of generations to follow. Aboriginal women sought to reclaim their place in

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[131] Newspaper Clippings, "Non-Status Women Speak Out," The Edmonton Journal, June 12, 1985 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] See footnote 16 for a definition of enfranchisement.
[135] Jamieson, "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act," 128.

Aboriginal society and within the community that was rightfully theirs; and were adamant in their stance that a piece of legislation not dictate their identities as "Indian" women.

CHAPTER TWO

Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society

We Must Help Ourselves[1]

Rose Yellow Feet *Mianistohkomiaakii,*[2] 1971

Alberta Aboriginal women congregated at the Mayfair Hotel in Edmonton, Alberta for the First Alberta Native Women's Conference, March 12-15, 1968. The theme of the conference was "Past, Present and Future." Rose Yellow Feet and Christine Daniels were in attendance.[3] From this conference emerged a recognition of the need to assess and articulate concerns of Aboriginal women; one of the results was the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS).*[4] Daniels, Thelma Chalifoux, Nellie Carlson, Jenny Margetts and, Rose Yellow Feet were involved in varying degrees with the *VANWS.* However, Chalifoux, Christine Daniels, and Jo-Ann Daniels communicated the concerns of Métis people, which included women's grassroots involvement in the *Métis Association of Alberta.*[5]

Although the *VANWS* was province-wide, this chapter will focus on the activity of Carlson, Daniels and Yellow Feet[6] and their initiatives in Edmonton. While maintaining a strong connection to their culture and identity and resisting assimilation, these Edmonton

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[1] James Gladstone Fonds, 1887-1971, "We Must Help Ourselves," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, Newsclippings 1971) M7655 File 396.
[2] *Sikotan* Flora Zaharia and Marvin Fox, Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi: Stories From Our Elders Volume 3 (Edmonton: Kainaiwa Board of Education, 1995), 52.
[3] Ralph G. Steinhauer Fonds, "Report of the First Alberta Native Women's Conference, Mayfair Hotel, Edmonton, March 12-15, 1968," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7934 Box 5 File # 46.
[4] Stan Daniels Fonds, "History of the V.A.N.W.S.," (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 Box 8 File 78.
[5] Muriel Stanley Venne was active in the Métis community as well, but her involvement will be discussed later in the thesis.
[6] Rose Yellow Feet spent some years in Edmonton and Lethbridge, as well as in her home community of Kainai, the Blood Indian Reserve. "Rosie Kate Yellow Feet," Lethbridge Herald: Obituaries March 2006.

women took a political stance predominately on social concerns, including lobbying for a safe place for young Aboriginal girls with social problems, education, housing and foster care as well as economic initiatives connected to Aboriginal culture.

Urban migration of Aboriginal people intensified in the 1950s and even more dramatically in the late sixties and early seventies. They moved to cities to seek opportunities such as employment, health services, and education. In 1976, there were 282,762 Aboriginal Treaty people in Canada; seventy thousand Treaty people lived off-reserve.[7] More than a million Métis and non-Status Aboriginal people also moved to urban centers.[8] Social programming, cultural promotion, and political voice became critical goals for Aboriginal women activists in Calgary and Edmonton.

Unlike the *IRIW,* the *VANWS* was concerned with Treaty **and** Métis women's interests, however, a number of women who were involved with the *IRIW* also held membership in the *VANWS.* In Alberta, the first Native Women's Conference in 1968, supported by the Alberta Women's Institute[9], was funded partially by the federal government and partially by the provincial government; the federal government provided grants for the Treaty women and the provincial government provided funding for the Métis women.[10] One of the results of this conference was an elected body consisting of a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and the group was registered under the

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[7] Larry Krotz, Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980), 10.
[8] Ibid.
[9] The Alberta Women's Institute was formed in 1909, as a branch of the Women's Institute (formed in 1897 in Ontario by Adeline Hoodless, now called the Federated Women's Institute of Canada). The main goal of the institute was education of rural women in the realms of 'domestic science'. C.M. Dirksen, Encyclopedia of Canadian Adult Education: Women's Institute (Abbotsford, B.C.: University College of the Fraser Valley, 2005) http://www.ucfv.ca/aded/encyclopedia/Institution/WomensInstitute1.htm [accessed 26 April 2007].
[10] Stan Daniels Fonds, "History of the V.A.N.W.S.," (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 Box 8 File 78.

Society's Act in 1968 as the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society.[11] A draft copy of the by-laws, which illustrate the direction of the *VANWS*, read: "The Board shall consist of the President, three (3) Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and twelve (12) Directors. The Directors shall consist of six (6) Treaty women and six (6) Métis women."[12] By the tenth year, the *VANWS* membership consisted of six hundred Treaty and Métis women in Alberta.[13] While the focus of the *VANWS* was Treaty and Métis women, membership was available to any woman residing in Alberta over 18. Any non-Native woman could be an associate member (the associate member did not have voting privileges at society meetings), and the fee for membership was one dollar.[14] Jo-Anne Daniels explained that the *VANWS* was an organization for all Aboriginal women regardless of legal status. However, Aboriginal women who lost their status or treaty rights were more involved in the organization *Indian Rights for Indian Women.*[15] Although the *VANWS* were active throughout Alberta, this chapter will focus on the activities of the organization predominately in Edmonton, with some discussion of Calgary.

One of the recommendations made at the First Native Women's Conference addressed social issues connected to urban settings. The following resolution specifically addressed urban adaptation of Aboriginal girls:

> Whereas many young native girls move to the city without knowing what to expect, we recommend that halfway homes be established in cities where girls could live for one to three months and receive information and guidance on employment

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Jessie Daryl Sturrock Fonds, "By-Laws of The Voice of Alberta Native Women Society-Draft," (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) 84.28 Box 1.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Jessie Daryl Sturrock Fonds, "By-Laws of The Voice of Alberta Native Women Society-Draft," (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) 84.28 File 9 and 10.
[15] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, July 21, 2006.

> possibilities, city services, educational opportunities, recreational facilities, budgeting, grooming, etc.[16]

Aboriginal women recognized that a service was needed to assist Aboriginal girls and women with urban adaptation. Recommendations were made to target social programming in both a proactive and reactive manner; while remaining sensitive to Aboriginal culture.

The experience of Audrey Provost, a young Blackfoot woman who moved to Edmonton in the 1970s to pursue an educational opportunity at the University of Alberta, clearly demonstrates the challenges that Aboriginal people, in particular, Aboriginal women encountered upon arrival to the city:

> That September I had been accepted by the University of Alberta but because of the problems I was having at home I didn't get up here until late. When I got off the bus in Edmonton I only had thirty cents in my hand. But, I was determined that I was going to make it for myself.[17]

Members of the *VANWS* were cognizant of experiences like Provost's. It was for these reasons, the organization implemented services for Aboriginal girls who migrated to and resided in Edmonton to pursue educational as well as employment opportunities. Students in Calgary also received support, which will be discussed further in the Chapter devoted to education.

One of the first acts of the *VANWS* in September 1969 was to address the social well-being of Aboriginal women and families in Edmonton. They established a good-will store or thrift shop, as they had received a number of clothing donations.[18] The thrift shop, it was hoped, would assist employment and volunteer opportunities for Aboriginal people

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[16] Ralph G. Steinhauer Fonds, "Report of the First Alberta Native Women's Conference, Mayfair Hotel, Edmonton, March 12-15, 1968," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7934 Box 5 File # 46, p. 28.
[17] Krotz, 151.
[18] Newspaper Clippings, "Native Group Looking For Thrift Shop," The Edmonton Journal, September 24, 1969," (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).

and serve as a location in which Aboriginal newcomers to Edmonton could seek support in getting acquainted with the city.[19] This goal was sensitive to the fact that Aboriginal people in the urban setting needed a connection to community.

Yellow Feet, a Kainai member of Southern Alberta, who lived in Edmonton, was determined to make a difference and address issues related to Aboriginal people in Edmonton.[20] In the 1970s she was president of the *VANWS*. She was part of the planning committee which started McDougall House in Edmonton, a home for "girls with serious social problems."[21] Her main motive for being part of this project was that she was interested in starting a home for women with emotional problems who did not have anywhere to go.[22] Yellow Feet's desire to help Aboriginal people in urban centres was demonstrated through her move to Lethbridge, Alberta later in 1970, where she became the director of the newly established Friendship Centre.[23]

Carlson was also an active member of the *VANWS*.[24] She was vice- president of the organization in 1970.[25] Under the auspices of the *VANWS,* Carlson took a leadership course at the Banff School of Fine Arts, and started teaching leadership courses to Métis people at Lake Isle [West of Edmonton].[26]

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Newspaper Clippings, "Problems Are Her Concern," The Edmonton Journal, Wednesday March 25, 1970," (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004), 28.
[21] Newspaper Clippings, "Problems Are Her Concern," The Edmonton Journal, 28. At the time this thesis was written, the McDougall House served "Adult women who want to live free from the harmful effects of alcohol, other drugs or gambling." The client focus may have shifted, but the mandate to help women to 'live free from the harmful effects' of addiction for example may also have been in the mandate in 1970. Alberta Government, "McDougall House Association," (Alberta: Alberta Alcohol and Drug Commission, 2007), http://www.aadac.com/86_287.asp (accessed June 30, 2007).
[22] Newspaper Clippings, "Problems are Her Concern," 28.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Nellie M. Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[25] Newspaper Clippings, "Alberta Native Women had Successful Year-Reports," The Edmonton Journal, Wednesday March 25, 1970, 27 (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[26] Ibid.

In March 1971, the First National Native Women's Conference hosted by the *VANWS,* was held at the Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton, Alberta. One hundred and sixty delegates attended this conference, which followed the publication of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Christine Daniels, Carlson, and Margetts were present as part of the executive of the *VANWS,* Daniels was the Secretary and Carlson was the Treasurer.[27] Honourable Robert Stanbury, P.C., Member of Parliament, (Minister Without Portfolio, responsible for Citizenship and Information) addressed the gathering:

> Perhaps this Council [*VANWS*] will lead to greater things...It is in your hands. They are capable hands, I know; all of us know. I am thinking of the executives of the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society like Mrs. Bertha Clark,[28] it's president; Vice-Presidents Jenny Margetts and Rose Yellow Feet; Co-ordinator of the Conference, Pearl Stamp; Secretary Christine Daniels; Treasurer Nelly Carlson; and Sister Nancy Leclaire...Native women have suffered double discrimination. You are still suffering. Yet you have bravely taken up the fight on two fronts: at home in the family, and outside the home in the community.[29]

Issues such as education, leadership, housing and discrimination were discussed at this conference.[30] It is important to understand however, that although these women promoted adaptation, they were also adamant about retention of cultural values and identity. Yellow Feet commented that security of identity was foundational, "In order to help native people and our families, we must first try to find out who we are."[31] Social concerns, cultural promotion, and political voice were evident in the agenda at this conference. For example, one of the discussions lead to a recommendation that all handicraft items dubbed, "Indian handicrafts," that were not made by Aboriginal people,

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[27] Stan Daniels Fonds, "First National Native Women's Conference, March 22, 23, 1971," Stan Daniels Fonds (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR 1999.465 File 246.
[28] Bertha Clark, an active member of the *VANWS,* was born in Peace River of Cree descent and resided in Fort McMurray. Canada: Secretary of State, Speaking Together: Canada's Native Women, (Ottawa: Canada: Secretary of State, 1975), 62.
[29] Stan Daniels Fonds, "First National Native Women's Conference, March 22, 23, 1971."
[30] "National Native Women's Conference," The Native People, April 1971, p. 2.
[31] Ibid.

needed to be taken off the market.[32] Conference participants were adamant that Aboriginal culture not be falsely marketed as authentic.

Christine Daniels was a co-founder of the *VANWS,* and she remained on the executive of the organization as president in 1968, as treasurer in 1969, and she was elected secretary in 1970.[33] She was an employee of McDougall House, and an active advocate for the advancement of Native women's rights at the provincial and national levels.[34] Daniels also taught leadership courses at Fort Saskatchewan jail,[35] an institution targeted by *VANWS* for support and service provision.[36] In 1973, the Fort Saskatchewan Jail included a half way house for female prisoners.[37]

Christine Daniels' daughter, Jo-Ann, reflected on her mother's leadership. She told the story of how her father wanted to protect her [Christine] from the animosity and backlash that many women encountered when protecting and fighting for their people. Daniels shared her mother Christine's experiences:

> And I remember when she ran for the president of the *VANWS* as they were called. I mean, she had found, finally had found her own voice. She no longer needed my father to either lead or do the work for her in activism. And, she ran for two terms, she was going to run for another term, and would you believe this? I was there and witnessed my father forbidding her to run again as president or she may not have a home to come, to come to *[sic]*. And I don't know exactly why he said that to her, but when I asked him about it years later, he said, 'I am a target, she will become a target, too.' He had this deep feeling of protection against, or for the women in his family…in his immediate family. And he didn't want to see her go through anything he had gone through. She did back down from it, but that didn't stop her from participating and leading without the title.[38]

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[32] Ibid.
[33] "Let's Meet Christine Daniels," The Native People, April 1971, p. 2.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] "Provincial Women Meet," The Native People, April 1971, p. 2.
[37] Fort Saskatchewan Museum and Historic Site, "The Warden's House," (Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta: Brian MacKay Computing, 1996) http://www.fortsaskinfo.com/museum/wardenshouse.htm [accessed 21 July 2007].
[38] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, Edmonton, Alberta, July 21, 2006.

Daniels was determined to make a difference within the Métis community. Despite her resolve to step back from elected leadership, she was still very much involved in formulating initiatives for the Métis community.

The Calgary local of the *VANWS* was also active in promoting Aboriginal culture, in the Southern Alberta region, specifically connected to youth. For example, in 1972, the Calgary local of the *VANWS* held a raffle to support Calgary Métis youth. The funds raised were used to sponsor a candidate to enter the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre's Princess Contest. The raffle prize was a beaded medallion promoting Aboriginal culture and the Princess contest was designed to celebrate Aboriginal identity.[39] This was also an example of a close partnership between the *VANWS* and the Métis community.

In October 1972, the *VANWS* membership totaled 190 members in Alberta, and by November 20, 1972, the membership increased to 211 members.[40] The membership had a vast geographical representation reaching as far north as Fort McMurray, and as far south as Cardston. In 1973, the *VANWS* held a general meeting in Edmonton. Some of the issues discussed at this meeting demonstrated a commitment to promoting Aboriginal cultural identity in Edmonton. For example, Christine Daniels seconded a motion to elect an administrator of the Provincial and National Indian Princess Pageant. The administrator of the Indian Pageant would ensure ongoing pageants. The input of Aboriginal women in the Princess Pageants would also guarantee that Aboriginal cultural values would be part of the event and not reflect an imposed version of Aboriginal culture. Daniels also presented a

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[39] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Elbow Drums: Calgary Indian Friendship Society, Inc., May 1972," Calgary Indian Friendship Society (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, 1971-1972) M7740 Box 1.
[40] Indians/Societies Fonds, "V.A.N.W.S. members," (Edmonton, Alberta: Provincial Archives of Alberta) 79.152 Box 2 Item 14.

report on a workshop in Hinton in which she acted as a resource person on behalf of the *VANWS,* and was persistent in lobbying for funds to bring more Aboriginal women from that area to the annual *VANWS* conference.[41]

In 1974, the first annual assembly of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), "Our Place in Society," was held in Thunder Bay, Ontario from August 22 to August 25. Education, health, employment, and justice were some of the key items discussed at the assembly.[42] NWAC was a national organization which represented the Indian, Inuit and Métis women's interests across Canada.[43] The *VANWS* were well represented in the official delegate list which included Carlson, Christine Daniels, Margetts and Yellow Feet, all living in Edmonton at the time.

Scholar Grace J.M.W. Ouellette described the genesis of the Native Women's Association of Canada which resulted from a variety of gatherings including Native women's conferences in Edmonton prior to 1974.[44] Initiatives of Alberta Aboriginal women were influential in the formation of a NWAC.; this was shown through their attendance at the local, provincial and national gatherings and through their input at these functions prior to the formation of the NWAC.

In 1977, the *VANWS* celebrated the tenth anniversary of the first conference in Alberta. The conference agenda was full, as the *VANWS* sought to address concerns related

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[41] Provincial Archives of Alberta, "Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society: General Meeting Held in Edmonton, January 29, 1973," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) Fonds: "Indians" PR79.152 Box 2.
[42] Stan Daniels Fonds, "The First Annual Assembly of the Native Women's Association of Canada," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 File 243.
[43] Grace J.M.W. Ouellette, The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, c2002), 31.
[44] Ouellette, 31.

to education, housing, foster care, friendship centers, and alcoholism.[45] The *VANWS* lobbied for more representation of Aboriginal content in the provincial curriculum, an increase in school lunch monies, and for adult education. Housing initiatives included the goal of constructing three hundred homes for Métis people in Edmonton. When addressing the topic of Friendship Centers, (institutions specifically designed to administer to social, cultural, economic and political concerns of urban Aboriginal people), they emphasized the need for more women's centers. The *VANWS* saw leisure time as a contributing factor to alcoholism, and emphasized the need for marriage and family counseling. It was thought that there was not enough follow up for clients after release from rehabilitation centers. It was also recommended that preventive programs needed to be implemented for youth, and that Native women be an integral part of these programs for youth.[46]

The 1983 Annual Meeting of the Alberta Native Women's Association illustrated ongoing themes and concerns of Aboriginal women in Alberta.[47] The brief of the conference described the symbolism of the logo, a circle with a Native woman in the centre and two feathers on either side of the circle, "The circle symbolizes the drum, a native woman in the centre, the two feathers symbolizes the Treaty woman and the Halfbreed."[48] The logo was representative of the organization's desire to meet the needs of Métis and

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[45] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society: Our Future," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR 1999.465 Box 23 File 240.
[46] Ibid.
[47] The name changed from *VANWS* to the Alberta Native Women's Association. The letterhead for this general meeting still showed the name "Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society," but the title of the meeting was, "Alberta Native Women's Association." Provincial Archives of Alberta, "Alberta Native Women's Association: Annual Meeting," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR199.465 Stan Daniels Fonds Box 22 File 235. In her interview, Jo-Ann Daniels also explained the shift, "It [Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society] had changed from the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society to Alberta Native Women's Society. But, it came from the same organization, the same people were involved." Jo-Ann Daniels, Interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 18/21, 2006.
[48] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Alberta Native Women's Association: Annual Meeting," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 Box 22 File 235.

Treaty Aboriginal populations. Chalifoux[49] and Yellow Feet were present. Yellow Feet was recognized at the meeting as one of the founders of the organization.[50]

The mandate of the *VANWS* was to address the needs of Treaty and Métis women in all of Alberta. Social concerns and promotion of cultural values were the main focuses of the *VANWS.* There was also a desire to build a unified political entity for communicating and addressing issues affecting Aboriginal women. Throughout this time period, the *VANWS* was concerned with a vast array of issues including education, social programming, alcohol related programs (as well as rehabilitation and after care), retention of cultural values, housing and foster care for Treaty and Métis children. There was a desire to tend to the needs of not only Treaty and Métis children but to guarantee a secure place for Aboriginal girls who were in need of direction; this was evident in their efforts to construct McDougall House. Métis women were also involved in a number of initiatives connected not only to the *VANWS,* but they also sought other means of expression for the Métis community. These Métis women were connected both to the *VANWS* and Métis organizations, in particular the *Métis Association of Alberta (MAA).*

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[49] Thelma Chalifoux was involved in the *VANWS,* however, she and her contributions will be discussed at length in the chapter devoted to the Métis community.

[50] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Alberta Native Women's Association: Annual Meeting," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 Box 22 File 235.

CHAPTER THREE

The Métis: *Otipemisiwak* [1]

If I didn't do something, my spirit would die…

Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, 2006

This was Chalifoux's reflection on why she became involved in Aboriginal initiatives.[2] Jo-Ann Daniels and Senator Thelma Chalifoux were active within the Métis community.[3] Although many of their initiatives emerged from their involvement with the *Métis Association of Alberta (MAA),* these women were instrumental in the formation of programs and services for all Métis and Aboriginal people. The *MAA,* formed in 1932, was a culmination of a number of Métis movements from the early 1920s in Alberta, as well as the St. Albert Métis Association (1897-1929).[4] The *MAA*'s mandate addressed political (including land), social and economic issues affecting the Métis of Alberta.[5] Many of their efforts dealt with urban issues. Jo-Ann Daniels was with child welfare and the Native Youth Alliance. Chalifoux assisted in affecting changes in social welfare and also assisted

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[1] For the purposes of this chapter, I will use the definition of Métis provided by Cora J. Voyageur and Brian Calliou, "descendants of mixed marriages mainly in the Prairie Provinces and in northwestern Ontario, although the term is often used more broadly to include almost all people of mixed Indian/non-Indian ancestry." Cora Voyageur and Brian Calliou, "Various Shades of Red: Diversity within Canada's Indigenous Community," The London Journal of Canadian Studies 16 (2000/2001): 111. "Otipemisiwak," in Michif (The language of the Métis), means "The Independent Ones," Métis Nation of Alberta, Otipemisiwak: Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta (October 2006).

[2] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, St. Alberta, July 4, 2006.

[3] Christine Daniels was also involved in initiatives related to the Métis; however her activism was discussed in Chapter Two. Muriel Stanley Venne was also at the heart of a number of initiatives; however, her involvement will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

[4] Joe Sawchuck, 49, 53. The MAA is now known as the Métis Nation of Alberta. Sawchuck, 25. During the 1960s, some of the political, social and economic concerns of the MAA included lobbying the government for profits in oil and gas sales from wells on the settlements that belonged to them, which would ensure economic stability and assist with road building on the settlements as well as providing schools for children. Sawchuck, 58.

[5] Ibid., 54-55.

in the recognition of the Aboriginal veterans.[6] These women maintained a strong connection to Métis culture and identity, resisted full assimilation, and were active in political, social, and economic initiatives.

The Métis population and its relationship to the Province of Alberta has been complex and distinct. A likely reason why many Métis chose to move to Edmonton was the proximity of Métis Settlements in the northern region of the province. In the mid 1930s, the Alberta provincial government implemented "The Ewing Commission," following lobbying efforts of Métis leaders.[7] The Commission, which lasted about one year, focused on health, education, relief and welfare of the Métis people.[8] The 1936 report focused more on social needs, rather than legal rights.[9] The Commission recommended allotment of Crown land for use by the Métis population.[10] In 1938, Alberta passed the *Métis Betterment Act,* which established Métis farm colonies or settlements.[11] The Métis were not given special status, as the goal of the commission was that Métis communities would develop into individual farms.[12] In 1940, Alberta amended the *Métis Population Betterment Act*, it defined Métis as "'a person of mixed white and Indian ancestry having not less than one-

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[6] Chalifoux was appointed to the Senate in 1997, where she was able to affect further changes for the well-being of Aboriginal people across Canada, which continued well past her term that ended in 2004. Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, St. Alberta, July 4, 2006.

[7] Catherine E. Bell, Alberta Métis Settlements Legislation: An Overview of Ownership and Management of Settlement Lands (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina), 5.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Sawchuck, 21. The concept of Métis Settlements in Alberta began as early as the late 1800s when Father Alberta Lacombe proposed, "A Philanthropic Plan to Redeem the Half-Breeds of Manitoba and the North West Territories," which would provide each Métis family with eighty acres of land, since that time, the concept of Métis Settlement underwent a number of shifts. Donald Purich, The Métis (Toronto, Ontario: Lorimer, 1988), 131-150. In 1990, the *Métis Settlements Act* awarded Métis title to 1.24 million acres of land and $310 million cash, to be paid in installments over seventeen years. The end result after seventeen years would be that the Métis Settlements would then be municipalities. Sawchuck, 99.

[12] Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times,3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 350.

quarter Indian blood' but did not include 'either and Indian or non-Treaty Indian as defined in the Indian Act.'"[13] Historian Olive Patricia Dickason explained that this definition restricted the numbers of those who would be eligible for provincial benefits under the *Métis Population Betterment Act.*[14] These are some of the reasons why Métis people moved to Edmonton. Métis resource and opportunity was reduced; as a result, urban migration increasingly became an option. The Alberta/Métis relationship is unique, as Alberta is the only province to pass legislation specifically for Métis people.[15] All eight Métis settlements lay north of Edmonton; Paddle Prairie, Pevine, Gift Lake, East Prairie, Buffalo Lake, Kikino, Elizabeth, and Fishing Lake.[16] These settlements were important community foundations for the Métis, however, a large number of Métis people moved to urban centres, such as Edmonton.

Prior to 1982, the Métis, like the non-Status Indians, were not recognized as Aboriginal.[17] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Métis perceived constitutional change as vital to the protection of their culture and way of life.[18] Under section 35 (2) of the 1982 *Constitution Act,* the Métis were recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal people.[19] Prior to 1982, non-Status Indians and Métis often worked together in organizations such as the

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[13] Dickason, 347.
[14] Dickason, 347.
[15] Alberta Government, "International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations: Acts & Legislation," (Alberta: Government of Alberta, 2006) http://www.aand.gov.ab.ca/AANDFlash/341B1A65CEDD421CA55C98E558175677_A68E213A68F243F786918921A27AF5A6.htm [accessed 30 July 2007].
[16] Alberta Government, "International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations: Métis Settlements Map," (Alberta: Government of Alberta, 2006) http://www.aand.gov.ab.ca/AANDFlash/6C7A79D9B7084D499B4E0141A90945AE_EA3E78B4E2F84830AA7B721ADF779E66.htm [accessed 26 May 2007].
[17] Sawchuck, 18.
[18] Purich, 167.
[19] Inuit were also recognized; however, non-Status Indians were still not recognized as "Aboriginal" under the 1982 Constitution. Sawchuck, 18. Please see the discussion in Chapter One on page 26 for a fuller discussion of the 1982 Constitution.

Native Council of Canada.[20] In 1991, the population of self-identifying Métis in the Prairie provinces was 101, 000.[21] One of the most significant differences between Métis women and other Aboriginal women is that Métis women were not identified as "Treaty Indians," "Status Indians," or "Non-Status Indians," but as "Métis." Some issues common to all groups of Aboriginal women (Indian, Inuit, and Métis) were those of social and economic concern, as well as retention of Aboriginal culture and identity.

Métis women were central to their communities. Scholars of Métis history and culture, Leah Dorion and Darren R. Préfontaine, explain that Métis societies were matrilineal and matriarchal and that Métis women's roles were valued and important for preservation of the Métis culture.[22] However, the status of Métis women shifted due to 'Europeanization' as their voices and perspectives were often overlooked in historical records.[23] Apart from trying to reclaim their roles as coequals in society, Métis women have also been instrumental in community development.[24] They have also worked to ensure awareness of Métis culture and identity.[25] Métis women, Carole Leclair, Lynn Nicholson, and elder Elize Hartley[26] described what they felt set them apart from other women's groups:

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[20] Sawchuck, 18.
[21] Sawchuck, 19.
[22] Leah Dorion et. al. Resources for Métis Researchers (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Louis Riel Institute of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, 1999), 5.
[23] Dorion et. al., 5.
[24] Dorion, 7.
[25] Ibid., 7.
[26] Carole Leclair, Red River Métis is a member of the faculty at [Wilfrid] Laurier University, Brantford, teaching in Contemporary Studies and Indigenous Studies; Lynn Nicholson, mixed-blood Métis works as community development coordinator in Toronto; Métis elder Eliza Hartley is Métis, graduated from McMaster University and is founder of the Métis Women's Circle. Carole Leclair, Lynn Nicholson with Métis Elder Elize Hartley, "From the Stories That Women Tell: The Métis Women's Circle," in Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival, eds. Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 262-262. The Métis Women's Circle was founded in 1995 in Ontario primarily

> We are Aboriginal women who have to create positive meanings around the terms of identity that we have inherited from both our parent groups. Métis oral tradition teaches us that we are never entirely 'other,' that our social and spiritual identities have always overlapped with those of our tribal relatives, other entities and our European relations in shifting patterns of creative necessity. Métis who remember *bush ways* remain connected with our first teacher, the land. In this way, we enact an Aboriginal ecology which adapts to, rather than assimilates, the larger common culture.[27]

Métis women in Edmonton were integral to community-building for Métis people, providing programs and services to assist with adaptation to the urban realm.

Jo-Ann Daniels was born May 27, 1955 at St. Paul des Métis in Alberta.[28] The daughter of Stan[29] and Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann identifies herself as Cree/Métis with Treaty Status.[30] Daniels served as vice-president of the *MAA* from 1983 to 1985.[31] Senator Thelma Chalifoux (née Villeneuve), of Métis ancestry, was born February 8, 1929 in Calgary.[32] She was involved in the *Métis Association of Alberta.* Prior to her appointment to the Senate of Canada, Chalifoux's activism was instrumental in addressing a number of concerns in the Aboriginal community. In 1997, Chalifoux was the first Aboriginal woman and Métis person appointed to the Senate of Canada.[33]

Jo-Ann Daniels attributed her activism to the influence of her parents, Stan and Christine Daniels. While speaking of her father's experiences with the Métis Association of

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dedicated to provide a unified organization for women of mixed-blood and Métis heritage. Carol Leclair et. al., 56.

[27] Leclair et. al., 56. Note: "The terms *bush* and *bush ways* are italicized to allude to the many layers of meaning which go beyond landscape and geography, and move towards expressing a Métis culturescape which includes our relationship to all the inhabitants of our much loved *bush.*" Ibid., 68.

[28] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 21, 2006.

[29] Stan Daniels was president of the *MAA* during the terms 1967-1971, 1972-1975, and 1976-1979. Sawchuck, 61.

[30] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, St. Albert, Alberta, July 4, 2006.

[33] Cora J. Voyageur, "A Conversation with Senator Thelma Chalifoux," in Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women's History, ed. Sarah Carter et. al. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 93.

Alberta, Jo-Ann reflected on her mother's role as well as the roles of other Aboriginal women in the Métis community:

> And I think it was 1967, he [her father, Stan Daniels] became the president of the Métis Association of Alberta...He hired my mother [Christine Daniels] as a field worker. This was something that was so close to her heart. That's what she wanted to do, to see her people organized. She wanted something to happen for her people...He surrounded himself with women, he got people like Muriel Stanley Venne, Gloria Laird, Ruth Daly, Thelma Chalifoux, he got such good strong Aboriginal women, and he promoted them-promoted them like crazy...he had this unshakeable belief in women, he had this vision of Aboriginal women to be educated, to hold down good positions because he saw what was happening. He saw that more Aboriginal women were coming. Aboriginal women were coming into the cities.[34]

Jo-Ann Daniels reflected on the political climate of the Métis people and how this influenced her childhood. She explained that as a result of her parent's leadership in the Métis community, she was given an opportunity to witness political events that took place throughout the 1960s. She recalled a time in her childhood when activists from various backgrounds visited her parents and how these visits inspired her. Daniels described how certain moments in her childhood illustrated the importance of being vocal and uniting to combat issues such as racial discrimination,

> ...we would have Jewish Civil rights leaders from the United States passing through Canada on their way to England...Black Panther leaders, you know, or people in the Black Panther would pass through our home. You know it would be almost like 'shhh'...hushed and meetings under lamp light and I'd sit in the corner and listen to all of these people and what they were seeing. And it was filling my father, and filling *me* with all of these ideas of things that were going on in the world at the time...Civil Rights Movement, and movement by African Americans in the United States and the movement that was happening here in Canada. You know, I remember...the forerunner of the American Indian Movement was the Red Power movement, you know and I began to get involved in that and the Native Youth Alliance ...of the mid and late 60s. You know, and we'd talk about a totally different way of looking at Native people, completely different way of looking at Native people...that we didn't come from drunken bums, that we in fact, had this

[34] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.

> strong sense of heritage of surviving and thriving-sharp people, sharp doers, sharp thinkers.[35]

Daniels spoke of her father's determination to provide a better way for the Métis people when he hitchhiked to Ottawa to present Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson with a pound of sausage purchased at a non-Aboriginal owned store to illustrate the disparate economic challenges that confronted Métis communities. The sausage was priced over three times the cost in southern communities in Alberta.[36] Daniels remembered her father's determination and how her whole life changed after that.

In 1983, Jo-Ann Daniels stepped into a leadership role within the Métis community when she ran for the vice-presidency of the *MAA.* She was working in television and film when her father, Stan Daniels, passed away in January 1983.[37] Daniels explained that her sister Dorothy encouraged her to run following the passing of their father. They were very much aware that prior to 1983, no Aboriginal woman had yet been elected to the executive of the *MAA.*[38] Her candidate biography outlined a number of ways she was involved in grassroots activism. Daniels traveled to Métis communities at Paddle Prairie and Peace River to assist in the formation of foster care for Native children.[39] She was an avid promoter of child welfare. Daniels won the position of vice president and served from 1983 to 1985.[40]

During her tenure as vice-president of the *MAA,* Daniels became even more determined to make changes, specifically in regard to Native child welfare. Native child

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[35] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.
[36] Sawchuck, 62.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Stan Daniels Fonds, "Métis Association of Alberta: Annual Assembly," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) Stan Daniels Fonds PR1999.465 Box 3 File 46.
[40] Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.

welfare was increasingly controversial, following the "Sixties Scoop" (1960s) era, which was a period when throughout Canada, a number of Aboriginal children were taken from their families and communities.[41] In the 1980s, Daniels was involved in one of the more contentious and sensitive cases in the Alberta child welfare system. The 1984 case involved a young Métis boy, Richard Cardinal, in which Daniels was instrumental in publicizing the incident:

> ...this letter came to me with this photograph and it was a plea from these non-Aboriginal foster parents who took in many Aboriginal children and youth into their home. And there was a picture of this young guy...I thought somebody had sent me a picture of a play, it looked so unreal...I must have read the letter about ten times. I thought, 'What? I'm looking at a dead Aboriginal youth who had just finished hanging himself.' You know, I could barely comprehend that and I phoned the foster parents right away and they told me that I was the first person to return their phone calls, willing to listen to them. And that they believe that they had been on a death watch and that they had clamored and begged and screamed and hollered for Social Services, for Child Welfare to pay attention to them, when it came to this young man. And I told them, has not the opposition called you or acted on this, the Alberta government. And they said, 'nobody, not absolutely anybody.' So, they told me the young boys name was Richard Cardinal. And they told me he had written his diary. So, I got hold of Linda Goyette from the Edmonton Journal and I said, 'We have to do something.'[42]

This was the beginning of a lengthy process of inquiry into the Cardinal case. Following the initiatives of Daniels and the initial newspaper disclosures, the government had little choice but to address the issue at hand, and to acknowledge where the system failed this young man. Daniels saw a flaw in the system in that children were apprehended on the speculation that the mothers were unfit. Daniels reflected on the time period surrounding the Cardinal case,

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[41] Patrick Johnson coined the term "Sixties Scoop," in Native Children and the Child Welfare System, in reference to this period of forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities. John L. Steckley and Bryan D. Cummins, Full Circle: Canada's First Nations (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2001), 193.

[42] Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.

> ...when it came to Richard Cardinal...I was there like a very sharp thorn, that something had to be done with the Native Child Welfare Act. And then, all of a sudden, my office was just flooded with information about what was going on with Aboriginal children and their mothers...mother's whose children were apprehended for no reason...I just pounded on Social Services and on the Welfare Act, that there be a proper Native Child Welfare Act...And thankfully that they were really good community people, too you know like Butch Plante or Stan Plante, who had right away a proposal to open a Métis Child and Family Service. It's still going..."[43]

The Cardinal case became a catalyst for acknowledgement of flaws in the child welfare system.

In her report to the 56th Annual Assembly of the Métis Association of Alberta, Daniels described some of her activities and observations. She exclaimed, "I have been fighting daily, but the battle continues. We are not up against merely poor programs and few services to our people, we are up against a larger enemy, attitude (this attitude engulfs ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudice which results in enforced poverty)."[44] Daniels also confronted issues connected to housing and education.

Thelma Chalifoux took part in a number of initiatives for the betterment of the Métis community. Prior to her involvement with the Métis community, she was involved with the *VANWS* and the *IRIW,* more specifically the *VANWS.*[45] Her immediate response when asked why she was involved in grassroots activism was, "If I didn't do something, my spirit would die. And in Slave Lake [where she resided in 1970], some of these men would come up to me and they'd say, 'what are you doing to our women?' And I'd say, 'I'm making them stand up to be proud of who they are."[46] Ultimately her goal was to

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[43] Daniels, interview, July 21, 2006.
[44] Stan Daniels Fonds, "AMMSA August 24, 1984," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) PR1999.465 File 56
[45] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview, July 4, 2006.
[46] Ibid.

secure the well being of future generations with a particular focus on Métis women and children.

Chalifoux's 1970s visit to Fort Chipewyan was a catalyst for her ongoing involvement in securing the social well-being of Métis people:

> It was in January just after the holidays and it was close to fifty below and there was an old fella there with gunny sacks wrapped around his feet and there was a woman there with five children and the welfare was giving her $60.00 a month just for propane and it was...it was the social services it was just awful. We went in there, the late Andy Collins and myself...and we did a report on that and when we brought it back to Edmonton when our president the late Stan Daniels phoned me up and he said, 'Thelma,' he said, 'they want to interview me regarding the issue in Fort Chipewyan,' and he said, 'but, I don't know anything you know...you just came back," and I said, "sure I'll talk.[47]

Chalifoux explained that the *MAA* fought for situations like this to be rectified. She recognized the impoverished situation that many Métis people faced and tried to confront these circumstances.[48] Métis scholar Howard Adams explained that, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, hunger and starvation were very much a reality for the Métis people, which he attributed largely to broken promises made by the government.[49]

In May 1980, Chalifoux outlined her perception of the economic situation of Aboriginal and Métis people, including the issue of welfare. She described the traditional teachings of her father who instilled in her the values of hard work and the pride that accompanied it.[50] She then commented on her attitude toward the perceived "handout" connected to welfare assistance, "They continue to give the 'handout,' after having confiscated the land and natural resources, but they continue to refuse the 'helping hand'-

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Adams stated that under Trudeau, the government made promises to assist in improving living conditions. Howard Adams, A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1995), 90.
[50] "Old Way' Is Best," The Native People, May 16, 1980, p. 13.

training in marketable skills, the education for a chance."[51] Some of her perceived solutions were that education and training were critical for the security of future generations. Chalifoux clung to the teachings of her father and remained strongly connected to Métis culture and identity.

Chalifoux's social initiatives were multi dimensional. For example, one of her projects touched on social, economic, and cultural needs. Although she lived in Edmonton, Chalifoux owned a thrift shop in Slave Lake where she marketed handicrafts made by Aboriginal women in order to help them supplement their incomes.[52] This was reflective of historical circumstances connected to Métis women's enterprise during the 1800s. Indigenous Studies scholar Sherry Farrell Racette contends that Métis women's handicrafts served a variety of purposes, "Women organized their skills, time and relationships to manufacture a range of products for a diverse market that included domestic consumption, exchange within and between communities, and consumption by other ethnic, and even international markets."[53] Racette explains that this type of involvement provided a strong relationship to Métis tradition in the form of "artistic production" and also played a vital role in the overall economy.[54] Chalifoux's initiatives reflected these same values and circumstances.

In 1985, Chalifoux, then president of the Métis Women's Council, spoke at Alberta Native Women's Association news conference. She was part of a campaign to dispel a myth that Native women in Alberta were "helpless single mothers trapped on a welfare

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing For A Living: Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production," in Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past , ed. by Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 18.
[54] Ibid., 18-22.

treadmill."[55] Chalifoux was concerned about the misconception of Native women and "welfare helplessness," she explained, "I still hear today that all Native women are single, on welfare and have live-in boyfriends...But our statistics disprove that."[56] She explained that a recent study examined the Native population and that the statistics did not reflect a trend of "helpless single mothers trapped on a welfare treadmill."[57] Chalifoux asserted that one perceived solution was that social workers needed to undergo cross-cultural training to avoid such misunderstandings.[58] She did, however, acknowledge that Aboriginal people encountered hardships. Chalifoux explained how she saw her own role and the particular challenge confronting Aboriginal people:

> ...when you go into your communities and you see the devastating positions that our families are in, if you don't do something, you're failing, not only your family, you're failing yourself. We've all been brought into this world to serve our people...so how do you not? How does...it's hard to explain...how do you turn your back? You don't! ...Because if you turn your back on the needs of your people you're turning your back on your family and your spirit dies. We, as Aboriginal people, and I've noticed this through my life...we, as Aboriginal people have such a strong spiritual being within us, that unless we listen to our spirit we don't survive. And so, it's really, really important that we take and listen to our spirit...very, very important.[59]

She aspired to protect the Aboriginal community from facing further obstacles resulting from a socially constructed idea of a "helpless" group of people.

Chalifoux's commitment and dedication to the well being of the Métis and Aboriginal communities was reinforced in her 2004 discussion with sociologist Cora Voyageur. Chalifoux commented on some of her past experiences and ways she was involved in grassroots initiatives. Chalifoux explained that she was hired by the Métis

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[55] Newspaper Clippings, "Native Women Fight Myth of Welfare Helplessness," The Edmonton Journal, August 13, 1985 (Edmonton: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview, July 4, 2006.

Association in Edmonton to act as a field worker in Duffield, "There, I formed the welfare department and the land department. I have always been a strong advocate for women, children and families. I think I was an effective agency worker because I had been a poor and single parent. I could empathize with the people I worked with."[60]

The Métis community in Alberta faced challenges. Métis women like Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann Daniels, and Chalifoux were at the grassroots level implementing strategies to address issues confronting the Métis community. Among some of the issues they tackled were child welfare, poverty and attempts to secure better housing, education and employment opportunities. Chalifoux was also adamant about addressing stereotypes and misconceptions about the Métis community. In particular, she wanted to speak to misconceptions and stereotypes of single mothers. In his discussion of the Métis communities in Alberta, Sawchuck explained some of these challenges during the 1970s and 1980s, when the *MAA* began to organize departments in the areas of health and welfare, employment, land tenure, economic development, housing , youth, culture, recreation, and education.[61] Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann Daniels, and Chalifoux were among the Aboriginal women who played important roles in these grassroots initiatives for the Métis community (and the entire Aboriginal community) while maintaining a strong connection to their culture and resisting assimilation. These women along with others, such as Venne, who will be discussed in Chapter Four, were at the forefront of grassroots activism in Edmonton. Their willingness, tenacity and steadfast determination assisted in confronting a number of

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[60] Cora J. Voyageur, "A Conversation with Senator Thelma Chalifoux," in Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women's History, eds. Sarah Carter et. al. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 96.
[61] Sawchuck, 65.

these issues, including addressing social concerns, promoting culture, and providing a political voice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Aboriginal Women in Edmonton, 1951-1985: Housing, Employment, and Human Rights

> Keespin esa Kasakehetoyah, Kasetos-katoyah, Kawechehetoyah, Namoya Ka-no-tin-to-nanhoyo[1]
>
> Lillian Shirt (Piche), interview by Corinne George, 2006

> A native woman who is an employment counselor at a Canada Employment Centre in Winnipeg summarizes her experiences in the following way: employers, she says are frequently not willing to give Indians a chance. 'I've had employers say; 'Don't send me any Indians.' Then I remind them that we have to abide by human rights laws. Then they say; 'Yeah we know but, we'll just say that they weren't suitable.'[2]

This testimony of an employment counselor in Winnipeg during the 1970s provides a glimpse of the discrimination Aboriginal people faced in Western Canadian cities. According to Muriel Stanley Venne[3] and Lillian Shirt, such discrimination experiences also occurred in Edmonton. David Newhouse and Evelyn Peters explained that 6.7 percent of the Aboriginal population in Canada resided in urban settings in 1951; this figure increased to 49 percent in 2001.[4] The Aboriginal population in Edmonton increased from 616 in 1951 to 13,750 in 1981.[5] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)[6] referred to this

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[1] Translation: "Imagine that if... there was no hate, if we loved each other, we loved one another, that there would be no war between us." Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006.

[2] Larry Krotz, Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980), 102.

[3] Maiden name: Muriel Esther Kopp.

[4] David Newhouse and Evelyn Peters, Not Strangers in these Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples (Ottawa: Policy Research Initiative, 2003), 5.

[5] Evelyn Peters, "Developing Federal Policy for First Nations People in Urban Areas: 1945-1975," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 21, no. 1 (2001): 65.

[6] A series of round table discussions focused on urban Aboriginal people was held under the auspices of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples from June 21 to 23, 1992. The main themes centered on services, governance, economics, health and wellness. Although, the study was conducted in 1992, the results displayed ongoing concerns related to urban Aboriginal people.
National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1993), 1.

period as the "First Wave" of Aboriginal people into urban centres.[7] Aboriginal people encountered an array of cultural shocks while striving to retain Aboriginal identity and culture. Activist Aboriginal women in Edmonton addressed the challenges of adaptation. Venne and Shirt were at the heart of some of these initiatives. Venne was involved in activism related to housing, employment, and also recognition of human rights for the Aboriginal community and Shirt sought recognition and support for the challenges Aboriginal people encountered, specifically with regard to housing and discrimination. While resisting assimilation and demanding respect for Aboriginal culture and identity, these women were active in political, social, and economic initiatives.

Aboriginal people in Edmonton faced many challenges connected to adaptation. Aboriginal reserves, Métis communities, and Métis settlements represented a place where their culture, family, and way of life were fostered and upheld. However, apart from those legislated by the *Indian Act* (as discussed in Chapter One) to leave their reserve communities, there were other reasons to migrate to urban settings, including pursuit of employment, education opportunities and because of a lack of housing on the reserves. Upon arrival in urban areas, Aboriginal people were required to adjust, to find a place to rent, and to seek employment. The authors of the RCAP report explained that Aboriginal people continued to migrate to cities for jobs, better housing, education, and social services, but encountered discrimination in housing, employment, and were culturally alienated.[8] Aboriginal women like Venne and Shirt were at the forefront in addressing some of these challenges.

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[7] National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, 89.
[8] National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, 90.

In 1966, the Alberta division of the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada[9] held a round table discussion and explored Aboriginal migration to cities during the mid 1960s. The study examined various aspects of Aboriginal urban migration, including reasons for the migration, the challenges that confronted Aboriginal people in urban settings, and the importance of their connection to their reserve and Métis communities. The study was multi-faceted in that it explored both Calgary and Edmonton and included perspectives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members (Calgary and the Aboriginal response to challenges will be discussed further in Chapter Five). This study concluded that Aboriginal people moved to the cities for employment, education, and housing opportunities,[10] but then because of the barriers they faced, many moved back to their home communities. Some of the reasons given for leaving the cities were lack of job opportunities, rejection by non-Aboriginal urban dwellers and the inability to secure adequate accommodation.[11] An unidentified participant in a roundtable discussion on "Indians in the City," stated that discrimination was a factor, but said- "we must live with this as it will probably always be with us".[12] Venne and Shirt's initiatives reflect acknowledgement of these needs and priorities.

Muriel Stanley Venne, who is Métis, was born in Lamont, Alberta, located about 65 kilometers northeast of Edmonton, but she resided in Whitford, Alberta with her parents until they moved to Edmonton in the early 1950s. Venne then stayed with her grandmother

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[9] The Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, a national organization based out of Toronto, Ontario with an Alberta division, was formed to address needs and concerns of Indian and Eskimo populations in Canada. Steinhaeur Fonds, "Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada-Summary of Discussions-Roundtable on 'Indians and the City'," (Calgary, Glenbow Archives, 1966) M 7934 Box 3 File # 23.
[10] Ralph G. Steinhauer Fonds, "Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada-Summary of Discussions-Roundtable on 'Indians and the City'," 6.
[11] Ibid., 17
[12] Ibid., 17.

until she completed grade eight, and joined her parents in Edmonton.[13] Her family moved to Edmonton because Venne's father secured employment at a hog ranch on the outskirts of the city.[14] While in grade ten, Venne was hospitalized for tuberculosis at the Aberhart Memorial Sanitorium, where she remained for a year. While in her third year of university,[15] she was forced to abandon her education and seek employment. Venne worked with the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) in the early 1970s, and there she was instrumental in the formation of the Native Outreach Program in Edmonton which was designed to address social issues on behalf of Aboriginal people, including housing and employment.[16] This opportunity ignited her desire to become involved with a number of initiatives connected to easing the process of migration and adaptation for Aboriginal people in the city of Edmonton.

Lillian Shirt, who is Cree, was born in Saddle Lake, Alberta. She left her home in 1954, when she was fourteen years old to receive treatment for tuberculosis at Charles Camsell Hospital.[17] She remained in Camsell Hospital for two years until she was sixteen, and during her hospitalization she took correspondence courses and finished grades ten and eleven. She stayed at a rehabilitation home in Edmonton to finish high school.[18] Upon completion of high school, Shirt enrolled in the nursing program. As a single parent of four in the late 1960s, Shirt faced hardships in Edmonton, which was a catalyst for her decision to address challenges that confronted Aboriginal people.

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[13] Muriel Stanley Venne, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 18, 2006.
[14] Venne, interview, July 18, 2006.
[15] Venne majored in Canadian History and her minor was Art. Venne, interview July 18, 2006.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Lillan Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[18] Ibid.

The concerns of Shirt and Venne stemmed from a multitude of factors that prevented Aboriginal people from securing adequate housing, including low income and discrimination. They recognized that discrimination and low income due to lack of employment opportunities affected urban Aboriginal housing. Krotz found that two major factors affected Aboriginal people while seeking housing in urban settings: low income and discrimination.[19] He explained that in every city he visited in the 1970s[20], he heard a number of stories in which Aboriginal people were refused tenancy, sometimes because the landlord had bad experiences with Aboriginal tenants in the past. These experiences generated a stereotype of Aboriginal tenants.[21] These circumstances prompted Venne and Shirt to actively initiate changes for the betterment of urban Aboriginal housing.

In 1969, Shirt, then Mrs. Lillian Piche, mounted a protest against the lack of housing opportunities for Aboriginal people in Edmonton. Shirt (Piche) mounted the protest after finding herself unable to secure a job and a home for her and her four children. She erected a tipi on Sir Winston Churchill Square (the grounds in front of Edmonton City Hall), where she and her children stayed for twelve days.[22] One of the landlords who refused to rent Shirt an apartment was interviewed. The landlord explained in an interview why she refused to rent to Shirt and her family, "I sympathize with them but I wasn't going to be the one to take a chance. Even newspapers write stories about the way they (Indians) *[sic]* live."[23] Shirt explained that there were other reasons for her protest including child

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[19] Larry Krotz, Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980), 55, 63.
[20] Krotz, 10-11.
[21] Krotz, 63.
[22] Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, June 12, 1969) 1999.465 File 63.
[23] Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," June 12, 1969, p. 8.

welfare, increased opportunities for education, a need to address alcohol abuse and human rights but housing and discrimination were the primary reasons.[24]

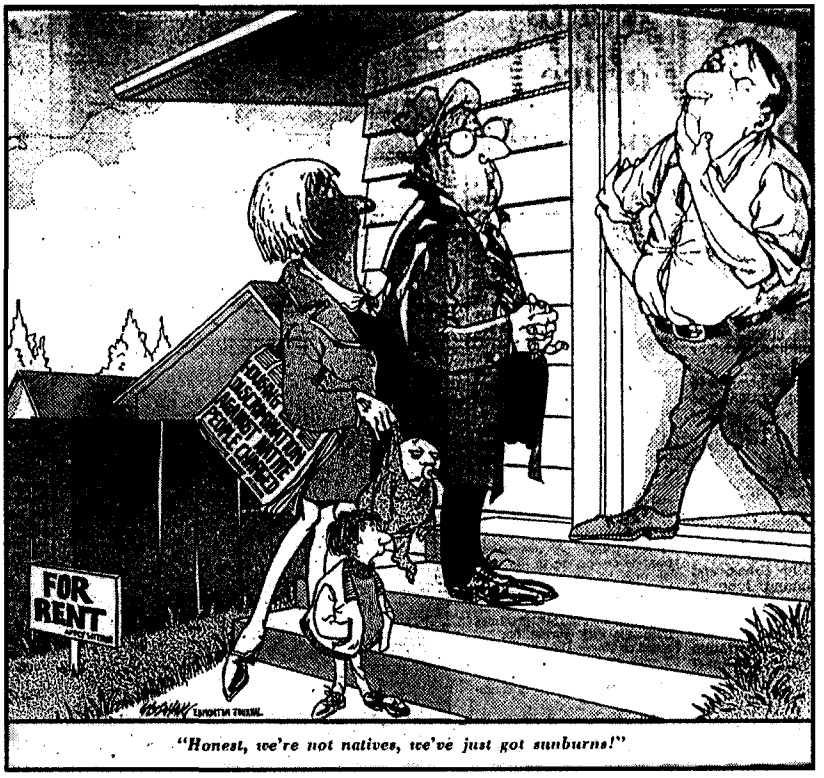

Figure 1: Edmonton Journal Tuesday June 3, 1969, p. 4

Figure 1 from the June 3, 1969 edition of the Edmonton journal used humor to demonstrate the nature of housing discrimination. The cartoon illustrates how Aboriginal people could be judged by their appearance (in this case, the family is not "Native" and exclaims that they have sunburns). The cartoon also reveals how truly absurd judgment on the basis of color of skin really is.

Reflecting on her protest in Churchill Square, Shirt remembered why she chose to protest in the manner that she did and described her feelings at the time:

> Anyway, I decided I was going to do something about it, it was in May, and I thought, 'Well, how am I going to do this? I am not many in number, not too many

[24] Lillian Shirt, interview, July 4, 2006.

> people will risk anything,' and I looked at it from all different directions. Looked at it, 'How am I going to do this?' So…I went picked up my tipi at my grandma's, cause I had decided what I was going to do. I was going to put up a tipi right smack dab in the middle of Churchill Square- right in front of City Hall, where the mayor could see me from his desk.[25]

This type of protest seemed to fit; being near the end of the 1960s "age of the sit-ins." The 1960s was a time of protest and transformation; civil rights, university activism and peace demonstrations were part of the political and social landscape.[26] This was also a time when women were starting to enter universities in greater numbers than ever and became increasingly vocal.[27] Shirt's protest attracted attention, not only from the media, but from people who were curious about the tipi in the middle of Churchill Square. She captured the attention of the mayor of Edmonton, Ivor Dent, who Shirt described as "very supportive". Around the time of her protest (she did not specify whether it was during or following), Shirt sat in the Office of the Premier Harry E. Strom, for a press conference outlining her grievances[28] and was promised that programs would be put in place to address issues such as housing.[29]

Shirt's protest captured the attention of media throughout Canada and widely different tones were adopted. The May 31, 1969 Edmonton Journal article, "Woman Sets up Teepee to Protest Housing Bias," described "her problem" and alleged living conditions in detail that placed the landlord in a favorable light:

> She was asked by her landlord, who had just purchased the building to leave. She moved March 1st. Mrs. Piche said the landlord told her too much noise was coming from her apartment... Her former landlord, however, says he had more than one

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[25] Lillian Shirt, interview, July 4, 2006.
[26] Judy Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 7.
[27] Rebick, 7.
[28] The Premier of Alberta at the time was Harry Edwin Strom, Social Credit. Gerald Hallowell, ed., The Oxford Companion to Canadian History (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004), 705.
[29] Lillian Shirt, interview, July 4, 2006.

> reason for evicting her, 'The only reason I put her out was because of her unacceptable living habits,' he said. 'Closet doors were taken off the hinges and used for coffee tables, floor tiles disappeared, and after she left, I had to spend $150 to clean the place up so that someone else could live there.' He said, 'I've got nothing against a person's color. I would still rent an apartment to a native person, but I would have to be sure he was a reputable, clean living person.' Mrs. Piche says the closet doors were already off when she moved into the apartment The floor tiling, she said, was merely broken off at the corner of a few tiles. 'They were poorly laid anyway'.[30]

An article in The Native People of June 12, 1969 entitled, "Housing Protest in Edmonton," took a different approach:

> The Piches are not certain what their next move will be. Rather than a one-man struggle or one family struggle against something which involves all native people moving to the city, an organization should be formed to deal with housing or existing organizations should move in to fill this vacuum that exists.[31]

The Edmonton Journal article that described Piche's "living habits" was less sympathetic to the plight of Aboriginal people and gave the impression that Native people were "poor tenants"; a view that could only perpetuate a cycle of discrimination.

Shirt was also instrumental in raising awareness of discrimination against Aboriginal people. Her protest in front of City Hall received local, provincial, and national attention. Shirt's protest even carried a global message. Newspapers including The Native People, The Edmonton Journal, The Globe and Mail, and Canadian Press reported on Shirt's protest. CBC radio and CJCA radio stations interviewed her as well.[32] As a result of the widespread coverage of her protest, CJCA personnel requested on behalf of a third party to speak with her about her demonstration. She was requested to go to CJCA radio station and speak with this individual on the telephone. Shirt recalled the conversation,

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[30] "Woman Sets up Teepee to Protest Housing Bias," The Edmonton Journal, Saturday May 31, 1969, p. 1.
[31] Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," June 12, 1969, p. 8 (Provincial Archives of Alberta, June 12, 1969).
[32] Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, June 12, 1969), 1999.465 File 63.

When they [CJCA] came down to the tipi, and they did an interview, and they said, 'This man would like to talk to you at the station. It's going to be an international interview.' And, "he's coming to Toronto to support peace...to promote peace.' And, I went to that radio station. We had a live interview from Edmonton to Toronto. And, this man said [to her] he had a sleep-in with his wife and this radio station. He said, it was John Lennon. And if you had said, Dag Hammarsjkold, I would have understood... or if you had said Martin Luther King, I would have understood. But, John Lennon? This didn't ring a bell with me. And he said he had a band, and he travels worldwide and that the issue he wanted to talk about was um...what I was doing there. He said, 'I want...I want to support you. What would you like me to say to the world?' And then I said, I thought of my grandma already again. I said, 'My grandma used to say, [quotes in Cree] 'Keespin esa Kasakehetoyah, Kasetos-katoyah, Kawechehetoyah, Namoya Ka-no-tin-to-nanhoyo.' And then he said, 'well, try to translate that.' And I said, 'I'll translate it,' I said, 'Imagine that if, uh there was no hate, if we loved each other, we loved one another, that there would be no war between us.' And he said, 'Do you mind if I use that?'... he had a real thick English accent, eh? He said he was from England [laughs]. And his wife's name was Oko Yono or Yoko Ono [?] [laughs]...He said, 'I like... do you mind if I use that?'... I said, 'yeah, go ahead, you can use that.'[33]

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[33] Shirt, interview, July 4, 2006.
John Lennon and Yoko Ono flew into Toronto on May 25, 1969 on their way to Montreal to promote 'peace bed-in' for seven days. Among other activities during their stay in Canada they were to meet and talk with anyone from the press from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. for seven days in order to promote peace. He arrived back in Toronto on June 4, 1969, and left Friday June 5, 1969. "Beatle Flies to Toronto, Detained at Airport,"; "Lennon and Ono Bring Message for Youth in Canada,"; "Press Elbow About Peace Bed-In,"; "A Quiet Day in the Lennons' Life,"; "Lennon Passes Up Visa, Flies Home," Globe and Mail, May 26, 1969, p.1; May 27, 1969, p.13; May 28, 1969, p. 14; June 5, 1969, p. 11; June 6, 1969, p. 13.
At the same time Lennon and Ono were in Toronto (and Montreal), an article appeared in the Globe and Mail, "Mother Confronts Edmonton Authority: Erects Teepee Outside City Hall," Globe and Mail, May 31, 1969, p.4.

Shirt's protest was effective in raising awareness of racial discrimination.

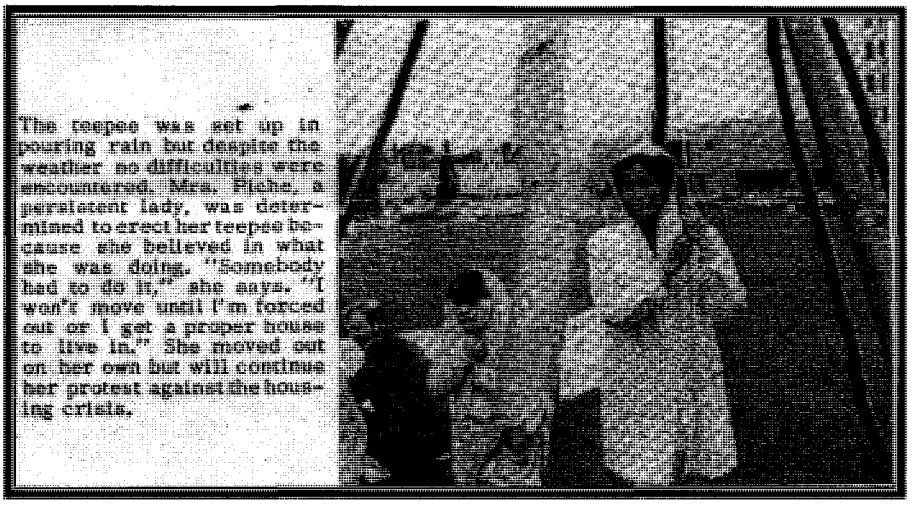

Figure 2 Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, June 12, 1969), 1999.465 File 63.

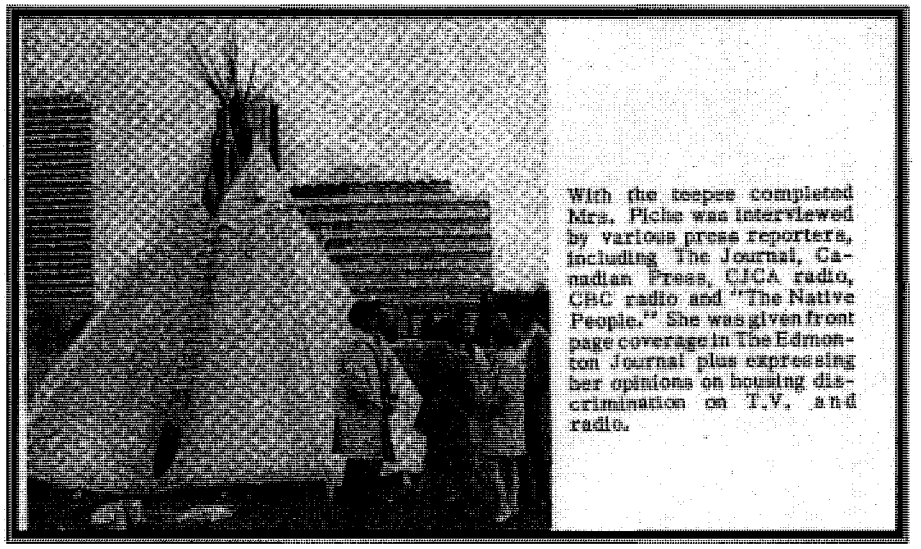

Figure 3 Provincial Archives of Alberta, The Native People "Housing Protest in Edmonton," (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, June 12, 1969), 1999.465 File 63.

Despite Shirt's 1969 attempts to bring attention to the urban Aboriginal housing situation, discrimination continued. Seven years later in 1976, Venne met with City of Edmonton officials expressing concern over proven discrimination against Aboriginal people attempting to rent homes.[34] Venne, Co-ordinator of Native Outreach in Edmonton, met with the Public Affairs Committee of City Council, explaining that Aboriginal people were obliged to live in slum-like conditions because many were unable to secure adequate housing elsewhere.[35] Some of the reasons why landlords did not rent to Aboriginal people were low income, large families, or they considered Aboriginal people high risk tenants.[36] Venne's suggestions included that the staff of the newly formed Edmonton Housing Registry get acquainted with the provincial Human Rights Commission and she recommended implementation of a program that would assist Aboriginal families in adapting to urban life and to inform them of proper home management and to become responsible tenants.[37] This meeting concluded with a commitment on behalf of the committee to address the issues raised by Venne.[38]

In the summer of 1976, Venne headed a study which resulted in a report called, "The Native in Edmonton."[39] The report, funded by Canada Manpower's Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), and administered by the provincial and municipal governments, outlined three major concerns, one of which was housing.[40] This report reinforced earlier notions as to why housing for the Aboriginal population of

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[34] "Housing Bias Attacked," The Native People, December 9, 1976, p. 1.
[35] Ibid., p. 1.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] "The Native In Edmonton," The Native People, December 9, 1976, p. 5.
[40] The other two concerns were employment and schooling among the Edmonton Aboriginal population. "The Native in Edmonton," The Native People, December 9, 1976, p. 5.

Edmonton was a challenge. These reasons included low income, discrimination and large families, but the report also considered lack of urban skills a factor in the urban Aboriginal housing issue.[41] "The Native in Edmonton" also identified Aboriginal population increase in Edmonton as a trend that contributed to housing concerns. Quality of urban life (adaptation and high cost of living for example) and lack of agency cooperation were also identified as areas of concern.[42] The report concluded with seventeen recommendations which highlighted the need to offer suitable housing for Aboriginal people in Edmonton; the report and recommendations were submitted to the Edmonton Public Affairs Committee.[43]

Venne and Shirt were instrumental in raising awareness of the issues surrounding housing in Edmonton. Their efforts to some extent were effective, as the provincial and municipal governments expressed a willingness to address their concerns. In particular, one change that occurred was an increase of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation support for Aboriginal people to provide them with better opportunities for property ownership off reserve.[44] However, urban Aboriginal housing remained an issue. The 1992 RCAP National Round Table on Urban Aboriginal Issues stated that Aboriginal people migrated to cities to seek employment and better housing, but were often unable to secure employment and lived in sub standard surroundings.[45]

Venne and Shirt experienced challenges connected to employment opportunities, and both recognized the necessity for increased employment opportunity for the Aboriginal

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[41] Ibid., p. 5.
[42] Ibid., p. 5.
[43] Ibid., p. 5.
[44] National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Centres, Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Centres, (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993), 85.
[45] National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Centres, 84.

population. Shirt was a skilled seamstress, she had completed grade twelve and acquired some post secondary education, was fluent in both English and Cree, and had resided in urban settings since she was young. However, she was still unable to secure employment in Edmonton. As a result, she had a difficult time securing a home for her family.

Venne also described her experiences and initiatives relating to Aboriginal employment in Edmonton. In the early 1970s, Venne, a single mother, divorced, with four children, and with three years of university education, was unable to continue her education, due to lack of money to support her children.[46] She applied to the MAA and secured employment in Job Opportunities and Placement.[47] Venne described how she and Stan Daniels, president of the MAA at the time, secured funding for what would become known as "Native Outreach",

> And at the time Trudeau was just elected, he was saying he wanted to do things different and Canada Manpower had an opportunity to, they were looking into projects. I went to Stan Daniels and said, "we [have] got to go to Ottawa and get this program which would consist of job counselors that would work with people to get them jobs...and we did....and we did get the money.[48]

Venne's initiative was fruitful. The funding was approved and the result was the Native Outreach Program, which mainly assisted Aboriginal people to seek employment opportunities.

In 1975, "Outreach", the original name of the organization, changed to "Native Outreach" and moved from the umbrella of the MAA to the Native Development Corporation, and targeted Treaty, Métis, and non-Status Indians.[49] Venne remained active as the co-ordinator of the program, which was based out of Edmonton, but expanded to

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[46] Muriel Stanley Venne, interview, July 18, 2006.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "Native Outreach Promote Native Hiring," The Native People, August 8, 1975, p. 7.

eight branches throughout Alberta.[50] In addition to assisting Aboriginal people seeking employment, Native Outreach enhanced manpower and promoted the hiring of Native people.[51] Under Venne's guidance, Native Outreach provided training and upgrading services.[52] Native Outreach was also committed to addressing language barriers in the workforce as well as lifestyle concerns of the clients (for example, providing information about health services).[53] Furthermore, Native Outreach assisted clients to secure housing. The organization hired staff who spoke Aboriginal languages as well as English. The slogan of Native Outreach was "Native people helping Native people."[54]

Venne's administration of Native Outreach developed into further programming sensitive to Aboriginal culture. One such venture culminated in the Native Urban Council, launched in 1977. The Native Urban Council had multiple functions; it was designed to be a central unifying body for Native organizations in Edmonton and to act as liaison in dealings with the Edmonton City Council, the Provincial Government of Alberta, and the federal government.[55] The Council provided not only a base for consultation with Native organizations in the city, but also provided a vehicle for exchanging information.[56] The Council supported proposed projects involving the Aboriginal community.[57] Two representatives from each Aboriginal organization in Edmonton attended the monthly meetings and involvement of all Native organizations at each meeting was encouraged, as this would facilitate direct and indirect contact with all Aboriginal people residing in

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[50] Ibid., August 8, 1975, p. 7.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] "Native Outreach Promote Native Hiring," The Native People, August 8, 1975, p. 7.
[55] "Native Urban Council Launched," The Native People, November 3, 1978, p. 12.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

Edmonton.[58] The underlying driving forces of the Native Urban Council, under the direction of Venne, were cooperation and support for the needs of Aboriginal people in Edmonton.

Venne was appointed to the Alberta Human Rights Commission in 1973[59] under Premier Peter Lougheed.[60] At the time Venne was appointed, she was employed by the MAA and was one of the primary developers and the coordinator of the Native Outreach Project.[61] Venne reflected on the event leading to her appointment and how she came to the attention of Premier Lougheed. Venne explained: "...at one presentation [at Slave lake] I made, Premier Lougheed was there. After hearing me, he actually called me at my office... and asked me to be one of the first appointed members of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. So, in that regard, I had an impact 'cause I was talking at the time about the discrimination, the unfairness, the need for job counselors."[62]

During her tenure as Human Rights Commissioner, Venne experienced a discriminatory and racist incident which resulted in charges against the offending parties.[63] The incident took place at the Calgary International Airport, where she and a friend were awaiting the departure of their flight. The Native People described the 1977 incident: "For twenty minutes they sat frozen in horror and bewilderment as two men at the next table... referred to them in loud conversation as 'f---ing Indians,' and 'wagon burners', and 'dirty

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[58] Ibid., p. 12.
[59] "Lougheed Announces Human Rights Commission Appointments," The Native People November 9, 1973, p. 1, 2.
[60] Premier Peter Lougheed (Conservative) was Premier of Alberta from 1971-1985. Gerald Hallowell, ed, The Oxford Companion to Canadian History (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004), 705.
[61] "Lougheed Announces Human Rights Commission," The Native People p. 1, 2.
[62] Venne, interview, July 18, 2006.
[63] "Venne Won Fight For Native Rights," The Native People July 15, 1977, p. 7.

Indians."[64] The two men who were residents of Edmonton were found guilty of public disturbance (the waiter was unable to verbally subdue the men) and they were fined.[65] Venne commented on her experience; "There is nothing that can be done by private comments, but anytime a Native (or anyone else for that matter) is harassed publicly he should immediately contact the police. Soon, she says, people will get the message that Natives cannot be publicly insulted with impunity."[66]

Venne and Shirt are examples of the impact that Aboriginal women had in building a foundation for future generations of Aboriginal people in Edmonton. Venne's initiatives centered on housing, employment, and human rights with a focus on discrimination. Shirt's contribution and protest heightened awareness of the challenges that Aboriginal people encountered with regard to housing and discrimination. Adaptation meant the ability to adjust to urban culture, which meant securing basic needs such as housing and employment. One of the major barriers to fulfillment of these needs was discrimination. Venne and Shirt's objectives were to ensure that housing and employment were more accessible; and furthermore that discrimination or at least overt discrimination was acknowledged and dealt with. Shirt, through her protest, wanted to heighten awareness of the impact of discrimination on Aboriginal people. Venne's reaction to discrimination and her ensuing involvement in the Human Rights Commission were ways that she wanted to address the issue of discrimination. In their political, social, and economic initiatives, Venne and Shirt demonstrated a strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity; thereby rejecting assimilation and ensuring inclusion of Aboriginal values, culture and

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[64] Ibid., p. 7.
[65] Ibid., p. 7. One of the men was fined one hundred dollars and the other was fined two hundred dollars.
[66] Ibid., p. 7.

identity as a foundation. Through their actions, these women demanded respect for Aboriginal culture. Shirt used a traditional dwelling to communicate discrimination against Aboriginal people. Venne's efforts ensured maintenance and respect of Aboriginal culture and identity in urban programs and services. These issues were by far not their only concerns and most certainly, these were not their only contributions. But, these contributions and initiatives indicate the lengths each would go to in order to advance the security and ease the process of urban adaptation for Aboriginal people in Edmonton.

CHAPTER FIVE

Education, Youth and Culture

> ...It was after midnight, I happened to get to her bed from the reserve twenty miles away...I got there. She spoke to me at her death bed, told me that changes were coming, and she said to me for these....when babies are born, theses babies, when they are born, do not know what affects them. She said, she mentioned something about flowers and these babies faces, their faces were poking out from the flower petal, you know the petals? And she said, 'for those whose eyes are open, they're born already. For those whose eyes are closed, they are yet to be born, she said. 'Could you do something for them?' And she said, 'she nodded her head; 'Say yes...' she said. She nodded her head, and so I said 'yes'. I did not know why I was saying 'yes'. My mother, she was one of these gentle women, and she was just very kind. She took a deep sigh, 'you will be protected...'
>
> Nellie Carlson, interview by Corinne George, 2006

This was Nellie Carlson's promise to her mother just before her mother's passing.[1] Carlson's actions through her involvement in the *IRIW* and *VANWS* were a testimony to her commitment to "do something" for the future generations. Carlson worked to implement educational programs and services for future generations. Women involved in grassroots educational initiatives included Thelma Chalifoux, Rose Yellow Feet, Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann Daniels, Lillian Shirt and Muriel Stanley Venne. However, the initiatives of Pauline Dempsey of Calgary and Nellie Carlson and Jenny Margetts of Edmonton will be discussed in depth. Dempsey (of Calgary), Carlson and Margetts (of Edmonton) maintained strong connection to Aboriginal culture and identity while addressing issues relating to education. Dempsey's initiatives in Calgary included an emphasis on youth programs and services that highlighted Aboriginal culture and identity. Community-building based on cultural identity and traditions targeted toward youth in Calgary became a focal point for Aboriginal women such as Pauline Dempsey and L. Cheryl Blood-Bouvier. These women recognized a need to

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[1] Nellie M. Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.

include Aboriginal culture and identity in education and youth programs. Their message was that assimilation and abandoning Aboriginal culture did not have to be a consequence of moving to the urban settings.

Aboriginal people moved to Calgary and Edmonton in search of educational opportunities, understanding the importance of education in order to succeed in the non-Aboriginal world, while retaining a strong connection to their home communities and culture. Scholar Verna Kirkness explained that from 1960 to 1970, the number of Aboriginal university students in Canada increased from 99 (in total) in 1960 to 298 in 1970.[2] In response to this trend, Aboriginal women in Calgary and Edmonton initiated programs and services to assist Aboriginal people in their educational endeavors.

One of the major reasons why Aboriginal people sought educational opportunities was a realization that education was a factor in the employment market. In 1966, a report headed by University of British Columbia Professor of Anthropology, Harry Hawthorn[3], A Survey of The Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, assessed the shifting attitude among some Aboriginal people with regard to education:

> ...the Indians themselves have seen that their representatives would have to be capable of using the language of the Whites and know enough about their way of life to explain their own claims effectively. Educational attainments and experience in off-reserve living became factors highly appreciated by the Indians when it came to electing representatives and band leaders. Educational achievement is therefore an increasingly prized accomplishment in the eyes of Indians when it comes to negotiating or bargaining.[4]

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[2] Kirkness, Verna J, "Education of Indian and Métis," in Indians Without Tipis: A Resource Book by Indians and Métis, ed. Bruce D. Sealey and Verna J. Kirkness (Winnipeg: William Clare Limited, 1973), 147.
[3] Arthur J. Ray, I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005), 330.
[4] H.B. Hawthorn, ed., A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies Volume 2 (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs, October, 1967) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/srvy/sci3_e.PDF [9 March 2007], 176.

Some Aboriginal people did not embrace contemporary education fully because they did not want to lose their connection to traditional education. Kirkness noted that traditional education was taught at an early age and included educating the younger generation in the ways of survival and life skills necessary for the livelihood of families.[5] Those who promoted education without recognizing the need to retain cultural identity and values were, according to scholar Sarah Eppler Janda, guilty of the "racism of assimilation".[6] She explained that mainstream society thought the ideal was the Aboriginal person who entered mainstream society, while shedding his/her cultural baggage.[7] The women involved in grassroots activism worked to retain Aboriginal culture and identity in contemporary educational settings. Although it is important to understand why there was an increase in Aboriginal interest in education, this chapter examines the challenges they confronted upon arrival in urban settings and the initiatives that Aboriginal women took to assist with these challenges and ease the transition for those pursuing education. A spokesperson for the National Indian Brotherhood stated in 1972 that:

> Unless a child learns about the forces which shaped him; the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being...the Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian.[8]

This was increasingly the perception of Aboriginal education and retention of cultural values from the late 1960s. Despite the fact that non-Aboriginal people saw assimilation as a solution, activist Aboriginal women saw the importance of Aboriginal cultural retention

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[5] Kirkness, 138.
[6] Sarah Eppler Janda, "'Her Heritage is Helpful': Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Politicization of Ladonna Harris" Great Plains Quarterly 24, no. 5 (Fall 2005): 222.
[7] Ibid., p. 222.
[8] Larry Krotz, Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980), 87.

and a firm foundation of identity as a vital component to education. Dempsey and Margetts encouraged education in and about both worlds.

Pauline Dempsey, "White Mink Woman", *Apsui-kyaki,* of the Blood (Kainai) Nation, was born June 18, 1929 on the Blood Reserve, near Cardston, Alberta.[9] Dempsey moved to Calgary, Alberta with her husband, Hugh Dempsey in 1956.[10] Dempsey, now a full member of the Blood tribe since Bill C-31 in 1985, lost her status when she married her husband Hugh, in 1953.[11] In part, her activism in the Aboriginal community was sparked through her father, James Gladstone who was president of the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) from 1950 to 1953 and 1956 to 1957; he was later appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1958 under the leadership of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.[12] Dempsey accompanied her father to IAA meetings and this proved to be an invaluable experience in terms of her later experiences of leadership and ongoing involvement with the Aboriginal community.[13] Dempsey initiated programs and services predominantly for high school and post secondary Aboriginal students. Some of her main goals were to promote education, to provide liaison for students, and to address issues of discrimination in connection to student housing.

Nellie Carlson and Jenny Margetts, who were both instrumental in the formation of the *IRIW* (as discussed in Chapter One) were also involved in education initiatives. Carlson promoted education, but with a clear emphasis on Aboriginal culture from kindergarten to

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[9] Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Calgary, Alberta, June 22, 2006.
[10] Ibid. Pauline explained that she was "commuted," and received four hundred dollars which equaled ten years of treaty money. "Commuted" meant that she was given a lump sum of ten years treaty money. Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006. Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law: Citizens Minus, 61.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Heritage Community Foundation: Alberta Online Encyclopedia, "Indian Association of Alberta,' (2005) http://www.abheritage.ca/abpolitics/people/influindian.html [19 March 2007].
[13] Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.

the post secondary level. Margetts, like Carlson, was also very active in initiatives connected to education. Margetts assisted with the introduction of programs and services in Edmonton specific to the needs of Aboriginal students from kindergarten to the post secondary level, specifically with regard to retention of culture and language.

Shortly after the Dempsey arrived to Calgary in 1956, it became clear to Pauline Dempsey that Aboriginal students who attended high school needed assistance to adjust to new surroundings and the new urban culture and she volunteered her time to assist them.[14] She reflected on her earlier experiences acting as an unofficial liaison between Aboriginal students and landlords shortly after she and her husband moved to Calgary, "I felt there was no connection between a student and the landlord. So, I kind of looked into that, seemed to me at the time, that Indian Affairs wasn't doing too much, so I took it upon myself to get the addresses of the landlord or the students, and where they were living and if there was anything I could help [with]. And all of this was of course volunteer."[15] Hugh Dempsey elaborated on Pauline's work assisting Aboriginal students:

> Also, some of the landladies…were not that great about having Indian boarders, and so on one occasion when the money was late coming in from Indian Affairs, that meant that the students wouldn't get paid before the end of the month, she could see that a lot of landladies would kick students out. So, she went down to the bank and personally borrowed the money that was needed to pay the students. And got the bank loan, paid the students, and they paid their board and rent and everything, then a few days later, the money finally came in… and they all signed their personal checks over to her and she took the money to the bank. And, people at Indian Affairs said, 'you just don't do things like that'.[16]

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[14] Residential schools were slowly phased out in the 1950s and Aboriginal students started to attend schools in cities. Education was still viewed as a way for assimilation but Aboriginal people endeavored to preserve their culture and identity. Jan Hare and Jen Barman, "Aboriginal Education: Is There A Way Ahead?" in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues 3rd ed. Eds. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), 345.

[15] Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.

[16] Ibid.

But Dempsey did. She ensured that the students learned urban survival skills, such as making sure the rent was paid. She provided valuable support for the young Aboriginal students in the city; she was willing to help them and gently guide them without judgment or disdain. When the students ran into obstacles and were in need of assistance, Dempsey said, "...Just had to take things into your own hands."[17]

In 1972, the Indian Student University Program was formed (ISUP) in conjunction with the Department of Indian Affairs and the University of Calgary.[18] The ISUP offered a range of services including a commitment to provide selected students with tuition, books, and living allowances.[19] The program encouraged teacher education and offered support in the areas of tutoring, counseling, extra curricular activities and it also offered orientation to the university community and the city of Calgary. Pauline Dempsey became its coordinator and she implemented strategies and services to assist Aboriginal students at the University of Calgary. She advocated better opportunities for all Aboriginal students including Métis and Non-Status and non-Treaty students. She recognized that a number of these students were caught in between two worlds and needed to adapt to urban settings because they were legislated to reside away from reserve communities. Dempsey advocated for Métis, non-Status and non-Treaty students understanding that this specific group of students had little support. This group of students was confronted with a shift of culture, in some cases new languages, and a potential need for counseling support to deal with the new circumstances. Dempsey helped ensure these services were put in place. Although, she

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "The University of Calgary: ISUP," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, 1973) M7740 Box 4 ISUP Métis Students, 1973.
[19] Ibid.

advocated strongly for the Métis, non-Status, and non-Treaty students, she was well aware that all Aboriginal students needed support and she was willing to do what she could.

In 1973, Dempsey wrote to James Foster, Minister of Advanced Education for the Province of Alberta. Dempsey learned that five non-Treaty students were promised sponsorship by the Indian Affairs to be repaid by the Métis Association; this was discontinued after the first term.[20] Dempsey clearly identified her views on the importance of education and the barriers that confronted Aboriginal students. She explained to Foster:

> I think it is unfair that these students at first be encouraged to continue their education and then be told that there are no funds available... They are excellent students, they have no source of funds from their families, and they intend to use their education for the betterment of native people. For these reasons I would hate to see them leave during their second year The Indian Affairs Branch will not be responsible for them as they are not Treaty Indians. For this reason, I would respectfully ask that your Department sponsor these students for the remainder of their participation in the I.S.U.P. Programme.[21]

Foster responded to her request outlining that the Department of Advanced Education did not cater to specific groups:

> The services of the Students Finance Board are available to all Albertans with the exception of Treaty Indians, who are made exceptions in the circumstances because of constitutional reasons which have yet been resolved. The amount and type of support available from the Students Finance Board varies with the needs of the individual students. However, we are not in a position to treat a small group of non-status Indians any differently than other Albertans would be treated in similar circumstances.[22]

In Foster's opinion, non-Status Indians were not to be treated any differently than other Albertans. Non-Aboriginal Albertans and Treaty Albertans were provided with

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[20] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Letter to Mr. James Foster, Minister of Advanced Education from Mrs. Hugh A. Dempsey, Coordinator of I.S.U.P." (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, 1973) M7740 Box 4 ISUP Métis Students, 1973.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

opportunities for educational support. Dempsey was an advocate for non-Status students, but as indicated through Foster's letter, these students continued to be overlooked.

In November 1973, Dempsey wrote a report as coordinator of the ISUP which explained the value of education, but also emphasized the importance of retaining cultural values. Dempsey described one of the greatest challenges that Aboriginal students in the educational setting were facing:

> I think the biggest frustration an Indian student faces is the demand of this university system to conform to it. In general, conformity as we know it today was never a part of the Indian's characteristics. All too sad, as a minority group in order to compete in this world, one has to conform.[23]

Her report outlined the services that the ISUP offered for Aboriginal students. As of November 30, 1973, the ISUP at the University of Calgary had twenty one second year students enrolled and twelve first year students.[24] She emphasized that this "Native Club" be a unifying body for all Aboriginal students on campus at the University of Calgary.[25] She understood the long standing importance of 'community' among Aboriginal groups. She wanted Aboriginal students to retain their culture and identity despite their decision to attend university.

Dempsey's 1973 report also highlighted concerns about Métis and non-Status students being unable to access adequate support to receive post secondary education. She

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[23] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Indian Student University Program: Report by Mrs. Pauline Dempsey, Coordinator, November 29, 1973," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, 1973) M7740 Box 4 IUP Métis Students, 1973.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

explained that in an attempt to rectify this situation, a proposal had been made to the provincial government for funding for fifty Métis and non-Status students.[26]

Margetts and Carlson worked together to include Aboriginal culture as a foundation to education at the elementary level in Edmonton. Together, they helped create the Awasis Program at Prince Charles Elementary School.[27] The Awasis (Cree word for "child") Program established in 1973 was formed to administer to the needs and concerns of Aboriginal children and families.[28] The program combines the Alberta learning curriculum and Aboriginal content.[29] Carlson reflected on the establishment of Awasis, in reference to Margetts:

> she started up this Native education program, you know...Kindergarten. And, two years after, I joined her, we started the first Native Kindergarten within the public school system. We were the first of its kind, in Canada, at the Prince Charles School. It's still there today. And the public school board supported it from Kindergarten to grade one. Two or three years later, they put it to grade three...grade two and three. And about three years later, it was up to grade six, and that's where it's at.[30]

Carlson explained that she actively promoted and communicated elements of Aboriginal culture in the classroom. Prior to her involvement with the Awasis Program, Carlson went into the classroom at her children's school and shared elements of Aboriginal (in particular, Cree) culture. These experiences were integrated into the Awasis Program. The program was targeted at a youth which demonstrated a determination to allow young Aboriginal students to embrace their Aboriginal culture and identity at an early age.

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[26] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Indian Student University Program: Reort by Mrs. Pauline Dempsey, Coordinator, November 29, 1973," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 4 ISUP Métis Students, 1973.
[27] Edmonton Public Schools, "About Our School," (Edmonton, Alberta: Prince Charles Elementary, nd), http://princecharles.epsb.net/about.html [27 March 2007].
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Carlson, interview, August 2, 2006.

In March of 1981, Margetts proposed a Native Studies Program within the parameters of the Edmonton Public School System.[31] The Native Studies Program was a collaborative effort between the Awasis Program, the Métis Association of Alberta, the Nechi Institute, the Office of the Native Advisor of the University of Alberta, and personnel from the Edmonton School System.[32] Margetts emphasized Aboriginal culture as foundational for urban Aboriginal students. She explained, "It is the Native position that formal education is welcome and essential to the Native people's desire to cope with the contemporary world and contribute to its development. However this education cannot be at the expense of our Native culture and heritage."[33] Retention of language, spiritual and cultural values was viewed as a way to enhance cross cultural awareness and as a pathway to future communication.[34] In May 1981, the official green light was given to the Native Studies Program, which would be called, "Sacred Circle".[35] This partnership between the Aboriginal communities and the Edmonton Public School Board was a positive step to address low Aboriginal attendance rate in public schools.[36] Carlson, who was also part of the initiative, recalled the news and explained that the Aboriginal community worked together to determine how the provincial funding would be disseminated. She explained that part of the funding would be directed toward a later initiative called, "Amiskwaciy Academy," a high school, which opened in 1999.[37]

Dempsey, Carlson, and Margetts actively promoted formal education in combination with traditional education. Dempsey addressed primarily post secondary

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[31] "Native Studies Program in the Works," The Native People March 6, 1981, pg. 12.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "Green Light Given for a Native Studies Program," The Native People, May 22, 1981, p. 1, 2.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Carlson, interview, August 2, 2007.

education in Calgary and Carlson and Margetts addressed education at all levels in Edmonton.

Dempsey was also involved in a number of initiatives connected to youth and culture in the Calgary region. Dempsey was aware not only of the issues and needs of her generation, but also of the need to retain cultural identity and values, especially with regard to Aboriginal youth. She saw this need as a vital link between Aboriginal people in urban settings and their home communities. In the urban centers during the 1950s to the 80s, the element of community among urban Aboriginal dwellers was imperative. People who resided away from family and support networks needed a connection to their culture. This section will focus on initiatives in Calgary because the oral histories and archival documents demonstrate more initiatives of this kind in the city of Calgary. Dempsey and Bouvier were determined to create a sense of unity among the diverse Aboriginal people who resided in Calgary.[38]

In her analysis of Aboriginal programs and services in Thunder Bay, Ontario in the 1970s and 1980s, historian Nancy Janovicek explains that the Anishnabequek demanded respect and retention of Aboriginal culture.[39] In her analysis of Beendigen, an emergency hostel for women in crisis and their children, Janovicek explains that the organizers of the shelter rejected the concept that Aboriginal people who migrated to cities chose to assimilate.[40] Rather, they strove to retain close adherence to Aboriginal culture and identity.[41] This was very much the outlook of Aboriginal people in Calgary during the

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[38] There were a number of Aboriginal groups within Calgary other than Cree, Métis, Blackfoot, some of these other groups will be identified later in the chapter.
[39] Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self Governance, and Native Women's Organization in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," American Indian Quarterly 27, no. 3-4 (2003): 549.
[40] Janovicek, 549.
[41] Ibid., 549.

1960s and 1970s. Education professor Betty Bastien stated that one of the major roles of the 'Indian' woman has been to maintain 'tribal identity' for their children and successive generations.[42] Urban geographer Evelyn Peters acknowledged the importance of retaining Aboriginal identity and culture in urban settings, and also explained the value of cultural cohesion among Aboriginal youth in urban areas. Peters explained that a priority for urban centres is to provide a space for Aboriginal activities and ceremonies and cultural education at all levels.[43]

In 1994, scholars Kathy Absolon and Tony Winchester described culture as foundational and vital for Aboriginal people in urban settings. They explained that cultural gatherings in urban settings such as pow wows and healing circles were important for urban Aboriginal people who wanted a strong connection to their cultural identity.[44] Moreover, they emphasized the necessity for Aboriginal youth programs and services to be established in urban settings for promotion of cultural values and traditions.[45] The process of promoting cultural values and traditions among youth had already started with the initiatives of Dempsey and Bouvier as early as the 1950s.

Dempsey was integral in the formation of the *Calumet Club,* as well as a club for Aboriginal girls in Calgary, called "*Ninaki* Indian Girls Club".[46] *Ninaki,* means "head woman" or "head chief" in the Blackfoot language.[47] *Calumet* is a name for a pipe which

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[42] Betty Bastien, "Voices Through Time," in Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength, eds. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 127.
[43] Evelyn Peters, "Aboriginal People in Urban Areas," in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, 2nd ed. eds. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 2000), 257.
[44] Kathy Absolon and Tony Winchester, "URBAN: Cultural Identity for Urban Aboriginal Peoples Learning Circles Synthesis Report," (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1994) Library and Archives Canada: [ca. 1700-1996]. R2847-07-F.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

symbolizes peace and friendship.[48] Dempsey also helped establish the Calgary Friendship Center and she assisted with the cultural programs connected to the Calgary Stampede.

L. Cheryl Blood Bouvier, of the Kainai Nation (who is also a descendent of the Dene[49] from the Northwest Territories), was born February 5, 1957 in Edmonton, Alberta.[50] She moved to Calgary when she was thirteen years old, when her mother wanted to pursue post-secondary education at Mount Royal College.[51] While her mother attended Mount Royal College, study groups were held at their home; these gatherings helped influence Bouvier's involvement in the Aboriginal community in later years. It was shortly after her arrival in Calgary that Bouvier became involved in a Calgary based initiative called, "Calgary Urban Youth Project,"[52] an organization that encouraged Aboriginal youth to embrace their identity, to maintain a strong sense of community in the urban setting and preserve elements of the various Aboriginal cultures.

Dempsey reflected on her arrival in Calgary, and how she and her husband started to focus on youth and culture in the urban setting almost immediately. She explained,

> We, at that time started the *Calumet Club*. And that was to, get the students together, get to know one another, because there were so many of them coming to Calgary...we called it the *Calumet Club of Calgary*. So, that ran for quite a few years and um, it was an outlet for the students, and a place where they could meet others who were having difficulty. Just generally interacting with each other. And we had students from across Canada. We had several from Six Nations, and Morley,

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[48] Glenbow Archives, "Calumet Moccasin Telegraph: February/March 1962, Volume 2 Nos. 2&3," Pauline Dempsey Fonds: Calgary Stampede-Calumet Indian Club of Calgary, 1960-1963 M7740 Box 3.

[49] "Often referred to collectively as the northern Dene, these people, who speak several closely related Athapaskan languages, include in Canada the Gwichi'in, Han, Hare, Tutchone, Kaka, Slave, Dogrib, Beaver, and Chipewyan peoples. The word 'Dene' or a similar term means 'person' or 'human', and it has come to represent the culture as a whole. Their traditional territory, located principally in what is now the Northwest Territories, stretches from the western provinces, east to Nunavut, and north to the tree-line, which reaches nearly to the Arctic Ocean in the Mackenzie Delta, and nearly to the Bering Strait in the West." Robert Wiseheart and Michael Asch, "Western Subarctic Aboriginals," in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History ed. Gerald Hallowell (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford Universiry Press, 2004), 658.

[50] L. Cheryl Blood Bouvier, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Calgary, Alberta, June 20, 2006.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Bouvier, interview, June 20, 2006.

> Blood, Peigan, Blackfoot, some Cree, so it became quite a good organization. They were just high school. None had gone to university yet.[53]

The *Calumet Club* increasingly became a source of community for Aboriginal youth in Calgary from its inception in 1960.[54] The motto, "We Walk in Pride," exemplified the values of the club, which were to provide structured social and entertainment events, as well as promote unity, provide guidance and create a stronger feeling of pride among Aboriginal youth in Calgary.[55] The *Calumet Club* was open to any Aboriginal person who held treaty status or formerly held status, and the membership fee was one dollar per year.[56] From its inception, the *Calumet Club* served to unify youth and culture in Calgary throughout the 1960s.

The *Calumet Club* held weekly meetings at the YMCA in Calgary.[57] The meetings focused on cultural values and respect for Aboriginal identity. The *Calumet Moccasin Telegraph* issued newsletters highlighting weekly events such as dance nights and study nights, as well as activities that celebrated Aboriginal culture. For example, during some of the weekly meetings, Hugh Dempsey presented a "History of the Blackfoot Indians," and "History of the Sarcee Indians."[58] The importance of acknowledging and learning about Aboriginal cultures from areas around Calgary was highlighted, despite the wide range of other Aboriginal groups in the *Calumet Club.* Aboriginal culture was also explored through panel discussions on topics such as treaty rights, and through movies such as, "Okan: Sun

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[53] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.
[54] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calumet Indian Club: Constitution and By-Laws, September 28, 1960" (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[55] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calumet Indian Club: Constitution and By-Laws, September 28, 1960" (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Glenbow Archives, "Calumet Moccasin Telegraph, February/March, April/May, 1962 " Pauline Dempsey Fonds: Calgary Stampede- Calumet Indian Club of Calgary, 1960-1963 M7740 Box 3.
[58] Ibid.

Dance of the Blackfoot".[59] The weekly meetings of the *Calumet Club* not only provided a unified structure for gatherings of Aboriginal youth in the city, but also provided a means for Aboriginal youth to gain pride in their Aboriginal identity.

Dempsey's commitment to ensuring respect and acknowledgment of Aboriginal culture for the youth as well as other residents of Calgary was demonstrated in a letter to the Alberta Almanac.[60] She appealed to CBX Radio to promote an event organized by the *Calumet Club*:

> We would appreciate it if you could give some publicity to the exhibition and sale which is being held by the Calumet Club of Calgary. This Club is made up of Indians who are working or receiving their education in Calgary. It includes members of the Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, Stony, Cree, Ojibway, Sioux, and B.C. tribes. In an effort to encourage Indian handicraft and to promote a greater understanding of Indian culture, a third Annual pre-Christmas sale is being sponsored by the YMCA...[61]

Dempsey's endeavors and involvement in the *Calumet Club* led to the formation in the 1960s of *Ninaki,* a club for Aboriginal girls. It began with an initial group of fifteen girls, and remained a central organization for Aboriginal girls in Calgary throughout much of the sixties.[62] One of the goals that Dempsey targeted in the creation of *Ninaki* was an avenue to help hone the leadership skills of Aboriginal girls.[63]

Dempsey was an advocate for an "Indian Centre" for Calgary as well, which she saw as an ideal venue for Aboriginal groups. She thought Calgary needed a central organization for Aboriginal people. In 1963, Dempsey wrote to Calgary mayor J. Grant MacEwan, on behalf of The Native Friendship Group of Calgary, the *Calumet Club of*

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Letter from Pauline Dempsey to Alberta Almanac: CBX Radio Station, Edmonton, Alberta, November 20, 1962," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.
[63] Ibid.

Calgary and the *Ninaki Club of Calgary,* requesting support for the construction of an Indian Centre in Calgary.[64] She explained that there was a strong sense of need in the Aboriginal community for such a centre to connect people with social programs and services, recreation, referral services, employment services, and housing.[65] Dempsey stated that the centre would provide liaison services, which would be administrated by Aboriginal people, but have non-Aboriginal people on an Advisory Board.[66] A key purpose of the centre would be to educate the non-Aboriginal public about Aboriginal groups as well as promote Aboriginal culture by providing a venue for handicraft sales and hosting cultural events.[67] Dempsey wrote to the mayor on behalf of other organizing members of the Native Friendship Group, *Ninaki* (Lena Gallup), and the *Calumet Indian Club of Calgary* (Mrs. Bea Garner, Laura McMillan, and Andrew Bear Robe).[68] Dempsey wanted to facilitate the construction of an establishment for groups such as *Ninaki* and the *Calumet Club* to provide a foundation for cultural programs for youth in the city.

In October 1964, Dempsey sought support and donations from the Aboriginal community to support a Christmas 'annual sale and exhibition of Indian work' in Calgary.[69] She requested cultural items such as beaded novelties, moccasins, belts, necklaces, and handbags, to sell on commission basis, with a small donation to go to the *Calumet Club.*[70] She described what the event would accomplish: "What is most important, you will be

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[64] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Letter from Pauline Dempsey to Mayor J. Grant MacEwan, Calgary, Alberta, October 22, 1963," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Letter from Pauline Dempsey on behalf of the Calumet Indian Club, Calgary, Alberta, October 17, 1964," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[70] Ibid.

helping the Indian students in Calgary by giving us your support".[71] Dempsey demonstrated how to be resourceful in the urban setting, yet still retain a connection to the Aboriginal culture.

Evelyn Peters' analysis concluded that Aboriginal people believed a strong connection to Aboriginal culture was a requirement for coping in an urban environment,[72] and that from the 1960s Friendship Centres were central to Aboriginal cultural and social activities in the cities.[73] In her M.A. thesis, Leslie Hall identified some of the main reasons why the Winnipeg Métis and Indian Friendship Centre was created: to assist Aboriginal people with securing adequate housing, to provide fuller access to social services, to offer employment services, and to facilitate a social network within the urban setting.[74] These were very similar to the reasons for the perceived need for a Centre in Calgary.

Dempsey was determined to create a venue for Aboriginal people in Calgary; a place for cultural unity, a place for all Aboriginal people, including the youth in Calgary. Following an election of the Board of Directors for the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre, Dempsey wrote a letter outlining her vision of the Centre:

> The Calgary Indian Friendship Centre should be the nerve centre for native services, or shared services. Such services as dealing with problems of employment, Court Worker, problems with the Indian youth of the city, housing authority, representatives of the southern news media, problems with alcohol. Being a co-ordinating body, the Centre would still have to be a referral centre but most importantly being an actual working centre for the Indian people. There would need to be person just in charge of Public relations at the Centre. This person would establish close comradeship with other existing services within the city, would be called upon to give talks to schools or service clubs on behalf of the Indian centre...Programmes of an educational nature such as cultural activities, teaching

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Evelyn Peters, "Aboriginal People in Urban Areas," 254.
[73] Ibid., 257.
[74] Leslie Elizabeth Macdonald Hall, "'A Place of Awakening': The Formation of the Winnipeg Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, 1954-1964" (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg, 2004), 25.

> youngsters, both Indian and non-Indian of the Indian languages used in this area. Activities would include learning about costume making, beadwork, or designing within the Centre.[75]

Dempsey's vision also encouraged positive cross-cultural relations. In particular her aspirations to provide a program to educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth about the Aboriginal languages in the area as well as bringing education of the Aboriginal culture into schools would promote cross-cultural understanding among youth.

In July, 1964, Dempsey, along with seventeen other people, who constituted the Board of Directors, successfully applied for incorporation of the "Calgary Indian Friendship Society".[76] The proposal for incorporation outlined the goals of the Board of Directors. These visions included: assistance for Aboriginal people adapting to urban life, promotion of leadership, and to provide liaison service between the Aboriginal community and the government, health, welfare, churches and other institutions.[77] Other goals were to maintain Aboriginal culture, to promote understanding and friendship between Indians and non-Indians, and in doing so, to ensure that the activities of the society were non-sectarian and non-partisan.[78]

The Calgary Indian Friendship Centre was established in 1964 under the Societies Act of Alberta.[79] A 1972 report prepared by the City of Calgary Social Services Department described the Centre as a central unifying body for Aboriginal people in Calgary. In the report it was explained that, "the centre has been attempting to meet a diversity of social, recreational, financial, and personal adjustment needs. Particular

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "The Calgary Indian Friendship Society, July 29, 1964," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 3.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calgary Indian Friendship Society: A Report for the Finance and Budget Committee Meeting, Tuesday May 9, 1972," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 1.

emphasis appears to have been placed on the maintenance of Indian cultural activities and assistance to Indians new to Calgary's urban life patterns."[80] The report suggested the Centre needed to tighten the focus to provide more concise services because since it's inception in 1964, it was "all things" to a number of Aboriginal urban dwellers.[81] The report also suggested more youth programs and services.[82] This reaction was an indication that perhaps more programs and services for Aboriginal people were needed in the city. After all, the city was full of programs and services suited for the non-Aboriginal culture.

"Elbow Drums", the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre's monthly newsletter outlined a number of services that administered to culture and youth. Dempsey's initial vision of cultural retention and youth programs and services was very much a reality. For example, the newsletter outlined items targeting culture and youth, such as Arts and Craft initiatives, Métis Youth and Calgary Urban Youth events, and preparation for the Calgary Stampede Indian Princess Pageant.[83] The newsletter also acknowledged recommendations of the City of Calgary, as well as the City's willingness to provide financial support to assist the Friendship Centre until other options for funding became available.[84] Educating others, particularly youth, about Aboriginal culture was also a priority for the Friendship Centre. The Friendship Centre personnel were invited to address different groups about Aboriginal culture in the Calgary area such as 'Brownie Packs', high schools, and churches.[85] Dempsey's initial perception of the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre as a

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calgary Indian Friendship Society: "Elbow Drums, May 1972," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 1.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calgary Indian Friendship Society: Information sheet," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives, M7740 Box 1.

central body for Aboriginal people in Calgary became a reality, in that the Centre became a central setting for Aboriginal youth and cultural activity.

Dempsey's initiatives extended beyond the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre in terms of Aboriginal cultural awareness and cross cultural relations. In 1970, Dempsey was appointed an honorary associate director of the Calgary Stampede as a representative of a service club and other organizations.[86] In 1972, Dempsey was among others appointed to the Indian Events Committee.[87] She became a full associate director of the Calgary Stampede in 1973.[88] Then, in 1979, Dempsey became a shareholder of the Calgary Stampede.[89] Since 1970, Dempsey was involved extensively in Aboriginal cultural awareness at the Calgary Stampede. Her initiatives brought about a number of events targeted at youth and culture. She was a volunteer at the Indian Village at the Stampede until her recent retirement.[90] The construction of the Bannock Booth at the Stampede and the induction of the Indian Princess Contest were among her initiatives.[91] Dempsey explained her initiatives as part of the Indian Events Committee,

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[86] Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Alberta Heritage Digitization Project, Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Annual Report, Calgary Stampede, 1970 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 200?) http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=%2Fcesa&CISOPTR=8649&REC=11&CISOBOX=Dempsey [accessed 12 April 2007], p.4.

[87] Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Alberta Heritage Digitization Project, Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Annual Report, Calgary Stampede, 1970 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 200?) http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=%2Fcesa&CISOPTR=8765&REC=13&CISOBOX=Dempsey [accessed 12 April 2007], p. 4.

[88] Calgary Exhibition & Stampede Archives: Alberta Heritage Digitization Project, Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Annual Report, Calgary Stampede, 1973 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 200?) http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=%2Fcesa&CISOPTR=8691&REC=14&CISOBOX=Dempsey [accessed 12 April 2007], p 16.

[89] Calgary Exhibition & Stampede Archives: Alberta Heritage Digitization Project, Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Archives: Annual Report, Calgary Stampede, 1979 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 200?) http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=%2Fcesa&CISOPTR=8348&REC=19&CISOBOX=Dempsey [accessed 12 April 2007], p 19.

[90] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.

[91] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.

> A lot of my volunteer work, I always kind of looked at the women... working with the women, always looking at the women, what roles they were playing...are they being neglected and all that. And, so through the Indian Events Committee, I organized the women, the women's activities if, you will... women's programs. So, one game we used to do, and the Stoney women just loved it, was a tipi contest. And we made miniature tipis. And it was a timed event and all these women came out and [laughs] were setting up the tipis. I mean the tipis were only about that high, I guess... five feet. Then I got the Stoney women together and said, 'What games did you used to play as children?' And they came up with this game called, 'teptheho', and that was timed event...knuckle game. They played with the knuckles, and these were real bones like from animals... knuckles... and then they tried to put [a wire on a stick and try to catch them on a stick].[92]

Dempsey's initiatives promoted awareness of Aboriginal culture beyond the parameters of Calgary because the Stampede attracted visitors from all over Canada and beyond.

During her time implementing strategies for youth and culture in the city, Dempsey was engaged fully in cultural activities connected to her own Blackfoot culture. Her interest in Blackfoot dresses and regalia was sparked after a visit to New York City, when her husband Hugh had a meeting with the curator of the Heye Foundation (American Indian Museum).[93] While Hugh Dempsey was meeting with the curator, she was invited to spend time in the vault to look around. There, she saw hundreds of Native dress from different time periods.[94] Upon her return to Calgary, Dempsey's interest in Native regalia escalated. In 1966, Dempsey started collecting Indian women's dresses.[95] Dempsey used this collection of eighteen dresses to educate others on Blackfoot culture; some of the places she visited were cultural centres, museums, schools, churches and historical societies.[96] This project was very close and personal to her heart as she reflected on her grandmother, Natsi-katwayna-myaki (Double Gun Woman), "My grandmother, you can see a lot of pictures of

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[92] Ibid. Note: Hugh Dempsey, Pauline's husband continued to explain the knuckle game, his explanation is in brackets [ ].
[93] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Dempsey, interview, June 22, 2006.
[96] Ibid.

her, and she was a dressmaker."[97] Dempsey's project demonstrated her desire to educate others, including youth, about components of the Aboriginal culture, with a specific focus on the Blackfoot culture.

Bouvier was involved in Aboriginal culture and youth initiatives in Calgary. Bouvier spoke of how the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre was a foundation for Aboriginal youth in Calgary.[98] She recalled her experiences as a youth residing in Calgary in the late 60s and early 70s, and emphasized the importance of the Friendship Centre:

> ...Well, upon coming to Calgary...they had started the Native Friendship Centres across Canada. We used to go meet there to, to have powwows once a year, or Christmas parties or Easter parties. And there were quite a few kids around my age. So, we got together and started a[n] urban Indian youth here in the city of Calgary. And that's what we were called, the 'Calgary Urban Indian Youth.' We started the organization with the assistance of a lady named Pat Waite...We became more recognized as a youth group in the city..., we used to go to different conferences that they would have. We went to leadership training courses in Phoenix...we were invited to different leadership courses in Banff, and went to different leadership courses in Edmonton, Arizona, in Alberta. And from there we started our drumming and singing group, too. Learning our songs, our Native songs and learning our dances again. Around that time, the AIM movement was starting to, to come around in our area here. So, our youth started to get involved in hearing some of the talks that some of the AIM members were bringing to the community. The activism was starting, so we started to gain pride in who we were as First Nations people- Indian People. We started not being ashamed of who we were and trying to question our grandparents and our communities on what Native was and what Indian was, what our languages were and began to value learning our languages again. So, we started inviting our elders to come into our groups and teach us our language and our songs.[99]

Bouvier's experiences as a youth in Calgary was an example of what Dempsey perceived as important for youth in the city. Dempsey hoped that the Centre would be a foundation for cultural activities, particularly for youth. Bouvier's experiences illustrated the impact that Dempsey's initiatives had on youth residing in Calgary. As a Calgary youth in the 1960s

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Bouvier, interview, June 20, 2006.
[99] Bouvier, interview, June 20, 2006.

and 1970s Bouvier testified to the positive impact that initiatives like Dempsey's had on her. She described a feeling of belonging, a sense of pride and a sense of empowerment.

In the May 1972 Calgary Indian Friendship Society newsletter, 'Elbow Drums', one of the organizers for youth initiatives, Pat Waite, wrote about the activities of the Calgary Urban Native Youth group. Waite highlighted a strong connection between Aboriginal youth and culture. She described activities that Aboriginal youth engaged in such as theatre focused on Aboriginal culture in southern Alberta.[100] This initiative gave the youth an opportunity to learn more about their culture and extend this knowledge to others. Waite also explained that the youth traveled together to events such as 'Indian Days' at a local school. [101]

Dempsey and Bouvier were involved in initiatives in Calgary that promoted awareness of Aboriginal culture and identity, in many cases with a specific focus on Aboriginal youth. In the face of urban adaptation and the challenge of different surroundings, the Aboriginal youth were given a foundation and a sense of belonging. In this sense, the hand that the previous generations held out to the younger generations, enabled future generations to retain a sense of identity, yet adapt to urban settings. Although challenges confronting Aboriginal youth are ongoing, initiatives in Calgary sought to ensure a foundation of Aboriginal culture and identity.

Youth, culture and education became a main focus for Aboriginal women grassroots activists. In Edmonton, integration of Aboriginal culture and education into the public school system was an important goal. In Calgary, education along with promotion of

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[100] Pauline Dempsey Fonds, "Calgary Indian Friendship Society: "Elbow Drums, May 1972," (Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Archives) M7740 Box 1.
[101] Ibid.

Aboriginal culture and identity in the youth community was perceived as important. Assimilation was viewed as a solution (For example the 1969 White Paper) to the various challenges confronting Aboriginal people; Carlson, Daniels, Margetts, Dempsey and Bouvier challenged the program of assimilation. These activists intrinsically understood that assimilation was not a solution; retention of Aboriginal culture and identity was. Their efforts clearly expressed these values. These women knew that Aboriginal people moving to cities was inevitable. Aboriginal people moved to cities because in some cases legislation forced their movement (*Indian Act)*, while others sought employment and education or there was lack of housing in their home communities. They wanted to make certain that upon moving to cities, Aboriginal people would not get lost in unfamiliar territory. These women understood Aboriginal people needed to retain their culture and identity; or their spirit as a people would not survive.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Aboriginal women made valuable contributions to the well-being of the urban Aboriginal people in Calgary and Edmonton from 1951 to 1985, implementing a variety of services, strategies, projects, and events. Activists were determined to retain a strong sense of Aboriginal identity and culture while addressing political, social, economic, and cultural issues, in an era when assimilation was still perceived as a solution to the various challenges that Aboriginal people encountered. These women understood that there was an increase of Aboriginal people in urban centres, and that retention of Aboriginal culture and identity would be vital. Whether these women descended from Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, or Métis lineage, they believed in the importance of connection to Aboriginal identity, yet respected the diversity of all Aboriginal cultures.

The evidence drawn upon for this study suggests that Aboriginal women were more active in Edmonton than in Calgary. Some of the possible reasons for this include the fact that some reserve communities are on the outskirts or nearby Calgary, such as Morley, Siksika and Tsuu T'ina. This fact may have made it easier for Aboriginal people to access services in reserve communities and be involved within the communities themselves as opposed to extending into the urban centre of Calgary. There are also a number of reserve communities outside of Edmonton such as Enoch, Hobbema, and Alexis. Population figures (as discussed in the Introduction) indicate that it was likely that a number of these people moved to Edmonton and that movement was not similar in Calgary, despite the same number of reserve communities on the outskirts of Calgary. The population of Aboriginal people in Calgary was low (in 1951, the population of Aboriginal people in

Calgary was 62 as compared to 616 in Edmonton)[1], indicating that fewer Aboriginal people moved to Calgary from the neighboring communities. Also, Edmonton is the hub for a large northern region of the province of Alberta, including the territory connected to Treaty 6 and Treaty 8; whereas the urban region of Calgary services primarily members of the comparatively smaller area of the Treaty 7 region.[2] This had an impact on the urban migration pattern as well. People from these regions were more likely to choose Edmonton over Calgary because Edmonton was closer to home than Calgary. As pointed out in the introduction, from 1951 to 1981 the Aboriginal population in Calgary increased from 62 to 7310 and in Edmonton from 616 to 13, 750;[3] the Aboriginal population in Edmonton remains consistently higher in Edmonton. Edmonton was also home to Charles Camsell Hospital (the Indian Hospital), which, as discussed in some of the interviews, was the reason for initial visits and relocations to Edmonton. Many chose to stay in the city after their release. Aboriginal people who sought residence in an urban setting from the Treaty 7 area also had an option of moving to Lethbridge, which was closer in proximity to the large Aboriginal communities of Kainai and Piikani. It also appears that the Métis influence in Edmonton was greater. The Métis settlements are all north of Edmonton, therefore Edmonton was seen as a service centre for the area.[4] With the exception of education, youth and culture, more Aboriginal women were involved in grassroots activism in Edmonton. Education initiatives in Calgary ran parallel with the creation of the University of Calgary's

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[1] Evelyn Peters, "Developing Federal Policy for First Nations People in Urban Areas: 1945-1975," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 21, no. 5 (2001): 65.
[2] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, First Nations in Alberta (Ottawa: Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2002), 2,3.
[3] Peters, "Developing Federal Policy for First Nations People in Urban Areas: 1945-1975," 65.
[4] Alberta Government, "International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations: Métis Settlements Map,") Alberta: Government of Alberta, 2006) http://www.aand.gov.ab.ca/AANDFlash/6C7A79D9B7084D499B4E0141A90945AE_EA3E78B4E2F84830AA7B721ADF779E66.htm [accessed 26 May 2007].

Native Student Club and other post secondary institutions. Strategies connected to youth and culture were of importance in Calgary; there were similar initiatives in Edmonton, but were less documented. Cultural initiatives in Calgary were in part connected to the Treaty 7 relationship to the Calgary Stampede.

Some non-Aboriginal Canadians throughout the 1960s still perceived assimilation as a solution to challenges confronting Aboriginal people. The "Statement of Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969" was primarily founded on a perceived solution of assimilating Aboriginal people into mainstream society. Despite the 1963 Hawthorn contention that all forced assimilation programs be abandoned and that education and social programming become the goal regarding Aboriginal people, assimilation was still regarded as a simple solution to complex dynamics.[5] All of the women interviewed in this study rejected assimilation as a solution. For example, Venne reacted strongly to discrimination in the urban centres and saw retention of cultural values as central to programs and services for Aboriginal people. Jo-Ann Daniels addressed issues related to flaws in child welfare and emphasized a necessity to acknowledge issues and conditions specific to Aboriginal culture. Dempsey's initiatives, while encouraging education, provided a cultural foundation for Aboriginal youth and students in Calgary, thereby fostering pride in their identity as well as maintaining a sense of community in the urban setting. These women addressed these issues as Aboriginal women on behalf of the Aboriginal community for the Aboriginal community using their identities and Aboriginal culture as the root of their strength, courage, and determination. Jo-Ann Daniels reflected on her father, Stan's insight.

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[5] Arthur J. Ray, I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005), 331.

He used to tell her, "Don't assimilate... infiltrate!"[6] Some of these women were obliged, because of the *Indian Act* to move away from their communities and implemented strategies to adapt to a new setting. But, they did not abandon their Aboriginal identity in the face of oppressive legislation, opposition, and discrimination. These women made certain that the strategies and projects they helped to implement would be based on the Aboriginal community and be sensitive to various aspects of Aboriginal culture (for example, inclusion of Aboriginal language, implementation of Aboriginal events such as powwows, and cross-cultural education).

Aboriginal people were more involved in the political arena in the 1960s.[7] One of the reasons for this may be that Indian people were able to vote in federal elections as of 1960.[8] Also, a 1951 *Indian Act* amendment lifted prohibitions on raising funds for land claims and hiring of lawyers.[9] Until 1951, Aboriginal voice was stifled as a result of this type of legislation. It appears that after this section of the *Indian Act* was repealed, Aboriginal people expressed their grievances in all realms more freely. These shifts in the political landscape enabled Aboriginal people to participate more fully in the political arena. Along with this surge of political activity came organizations including the *IRIW* and the *VANWS.* As social issues started to present obstacles, such as for example, housing and discrimination, Aboriginal women sought solutions for Aboriginal people in urban settings. Retention of culture and identity was a goal. For example, the women involved in the *IRIW* were determined to have the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act*, section 12 (1) (b)

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[6] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, July 21, 2006.
[7] Howard Adams, A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1995), 79.
[8] Arthur J. Ray, I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005), 313.
[9] Ray, 315. From 1927 to 1951, under the *Indian Act*, Aboriginal people were prohibited from raising funds in support of land claims. Ray, 315-326.

amended. In doing so, they ensured that their "Indian" identity would not be diminished in any form.

A number of the women featured in this study were acknowledged for their efforts. In 1988, along with other women from across Canada, Carlson received the "1988 Persons Award," which is an award presented to women who have campaigned in some capacity for women's rights.[10] Carlson was recognized for her campaigns for recognition of rights for Aboriginal women.[11] In 2005, Carlson was asked to be part of the Elder's Circle for the City of Edmonton, which is a body of ten Aboriginal elders who work with the City to consult on matters affecting Aboriginal people.[12] Apart from her appointment to the Senate of Canada, Senator Chalifoux was also recognized for her leadership through an appointment to Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, with a specific focus on Aboriginal youth; one of the results was "Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan For Change, 2003".[13] Christine Daniels received an award from the Edmonton City Council in 1975 for her efforts in the realm of health and welfare.[14] Upon receipt of the news, Christine commented that the award had special significance because it was to be presented during International Women's Year.[15] Pauline Dempsey was recognized by The City of Calgary for her role in the betterment of Native/White relations in 1987 when she received the Chief David Crowchild Award.[16] Apart from her 1973 appointment to the Alberta Human Rights Commission, Venne was selected as "Canada's Outstanding Female

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[10] Newspaper Clippings, "Edmonton Journal: 'Committed to Her People', Monday October 21, 1991," (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Nellie Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[13] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, St. Albert, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[14] "Christine Daniels Receives Award From City," The Native People December 19, 1975, p. 15.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Calgary, Alberta, June 22, 2006.

for 1978."[17] In 2005, Venne was also acknowledged through receipt of the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Person's Case.[18] In 1998, Yellow Feet's contributions were acknowledged by the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women as she received an "Esquao Award."[19] These women were recognized for their achievements and roles within not only the Aboriginal community, but at the local, provincial, national, and international levels.

Aboriginal women who became the political voice for the *IRIW* and the *VANWS* reacted against oppression and discrimination. The women of the *IRIW* were determined to have the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* removed. Despite opposition from conservative minded forces, the women continued to lobby and in 1985, Bill C-31 amended the discriminatory elements of the *Indian Act.* The Aboriginal women of the *VANWS*, tending primarily to the needs of Treaty and Métis, were also political in addressing social and economic issues in the urban settings. Both of these groups upheld Aboriginal culture and identity. The Métis women who were involved in concerns related to the Aboriginal community in Edmonton vocalized their grievances through political action and voice, addressing social and economic issues. Aboriginal women in Edmonton were vocal in social and economic issues of housing, employment, human rights, discrimination, and education. Moving to urban centres and seeking ways to ease the process of adaptation could be perceived as approval of assimilation. However, Aboriginal women activists were ensuring the security and well-being of the Aboriginal community who needed to reside

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[17] "Venne Selected Outstanding Woman for 1978,: The Native People April 28, 1978, p. 1, 2.
[18] Muriel Stanley Venne, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 18, 2006.
[19] Alberta Sweetgrass, "Distinguished Women Honored," (Alberta: Aboriginal Multi-Media Society, June 11, 1998) http://www.ammsa.com/sweetgrass/JUNE98.html [accessed 29 May 2007].

away from their home communities. Upon close examination, Aboriginal culture and identity were at the heart of these initiatives.

This is only a partial story. The words of the 1968 keynote address at the First Alberta Native Women's Conference by Mary Ann Lavallee appealed to the "the moral courage, the stamina and the sinew of grandmother's heart and spirit."[20] The ensuing events certainly indicated that in many cases the 'sinew of grandmother's heart and spirit' spoke through the actions and reactions of these Aboriginal women.

[20] Steinhauer Fonds, "First Alberta Native Women's Conference, 1968," (Calgary: Glenbow Archives, 1955-1987) M7934 Box 5 File # 46.

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APPENDIX A

Biographies

L. Cheryl Blood Bouvier: L. (Leslie) Cheryl Blood Bouvier, a registered member of Treaty Seven of the Blood Tribe and also of Dene descent, was born on February 5, 1957.[1] She moved to Calgary when she was thirteen years old, when her mother wanted to pursue education at Mount Royal College.[2] Shortly after her arrival to Calgary, Bouvier became involved in a Calgary based initiative called, "Calgary Urban Youth Project."[3] She was influenced by her parents, grandparents, and great grandparents; she explained that her mother strove for education and became a social worker.[4] Bouvier was involved in the early stages of The Calgary Urban Youth Project which encouraged Aboriginal youth to embrace their identity, to maintain as strong sense of community in the urban setting and preserve elements of the various Aboriginal cultures.

Nellie Carlson: Nellie Mildred Carlson (née Makokis), who is Cree, was born July 3, 1927 in Saddle Lake, Alberta.[5] She left Saddle Lake with her husband in 1956 after her decision to vocalize her grievances against the *Indian Act.*[6] Carlson sat on the Social Justice Commission in 1976.[7] She was involved at the grassroots level of organizations such as the *Indian Rights for Indian Women* and the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society,* as well as initiatives connected to education. Carlson was the recipient of the Governor General's Award in 1988 for her efforts in combating the discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act* against Aboriginal women.[8] She was honoured by the City of Edmonton, when a street was named after her, "Carlson Close".[9] As of 2006, Carlson was still actively involved in the Aboriginal community in Edmonton, as an elder for the *Amiskwaciy Academy,* and a member of the Elder's Circle for the City of Edmonton.[10]

Senator Thelma Chalifoux: Senator Thelma Chalifoux (née Villeneuve) of Métis ancestry, was born February 8, 1929.[11] She was involved in the *Indian Rights for Indian Women,* the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society,* and the *Métis Association of Alberta.* In 1997, Chalifoux was the first Aboriginal woman and Métis person appointed to the Senate of Canada.[12] Chalifoux was involved in advocacy for the Aboriginal Veteran's

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[1] L. Cheryl Blood Bouvier, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Tsuu T'ina, June 20, 2006.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Bouvier, interview, June 20, 2006.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Nellie Carlson, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2, 2006.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Senator Thelma Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, St. Albert, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[12] Cora J. Voyageur, "A Conversation with Senator Thelma Chalifoux," in Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women's History, ed. Sarah Carter et. al. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 93.

Association.[13] In the 1970s, Senator Chalifoux was appointed to the University of Alberta Senate.[14] In 1984-85, Senator Chalifoux headed a research team on Aboriginal Senior's Housing; one of the results, the "Stan Daniels Manor," in Edmonton, houses more than 50 Aboriginal Seniors.[15] Her numerous accomplishments and her achievements extending from the 1960s to the present include advocacy work for Aboriginal people, women, youth and seniors and Aboriginal veterans at the political, social, economic and cultural levels.

Christine Daniels: Daniels (née Whiskeyjack) of Cree ancestry, was born in Saddle Lake[16], but resided in Edmonton, Alberta.[17] Daniels lost her Native status upon marriage.[18] Daniels was a co-founder of the *Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS)*, where she vocalized concerns of Treaty women losing their rights when Aboriginal women married non-Treaty men.[19] In 1975, Daniels received an award from Edmonton City Council in the field of health and welfare work, acknowledging her role in addressing concerns of Aboriginal women.[20] Her activism included involvement in the *VANWS*, the *IRIW,* and the *Métis Association of Alberta (MAA).* In 1975, Daniels also served as an in-house director for Poundmaker Lodge (and served on the board of directors), an alcoholism rehabilitation centre near St. Albert.[21]

Jo-Ann Daniels: Jo-Anne Daniels was born May 27, 1955 at St. Paul des Métis in Alberta.[22] Daughter of Stan and Christine Daniels, Jo-Ann identifies herself as Cree/Métis with Treaty Status.[23] Daniels served as vice-president of the *MAA* from 1983 to 1985.[24] Apart from her extensive involvement surrounding the Native Child Welfare Act (discussed in depth in Chapter Three), Daniels worked with Native Outreach, *VANWS,* Alberta Native Communications Society, and addressed issues relating to education, employment, children, and housing within the Aboriginal community.[25]

Pauline Dempsey: Pauline Dempsey, *Apsui-kyaki,* "White Mink Woman," of the Blood Tribe, was born in Southern Alberta on June 18, 1929.[26] Dempsey and her husband, Hugh, moved to Calgary in 1956, when he transferred to Calgary to work for the Glenbow Museum.[27] Pauline Dempsey, now a full member of the Blood tribe since Bill C-31 in

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[13] Senator Chalifoux, interview by Corinne George, July 4, 2006.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 21, 2006.
[17] "Christine Daniels Receives Award From City," The Native People December 19, 1975, p. 15.
[18] "Let's Meet Christine Daniels," The Native People April 1971, p. 6.
[19] Ibid., p.6.
[20] "Christine Daniels Receives Award From City," The Native People December 19, 1975, p. 15.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Jo-Ann Daniels, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 21, 2006.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Provincial Archives of Alberta, "Métis Association of Alberta: Annual Assembly, August 13 and 14th 1983" (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta) Stan Daniels Fonds PR1999.465 Box 3, File 6.
[26] Pauline and Hugh Dempsey, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Calgary, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[27] Ibid.

1985, lost her status when she married her husband Hugh, in 1953. [28] Dempsey became involved in the Indian Association of Alberta, through the influence of her father James Gladstone.[29] She became further involved in the Calgary urban Aboriginal community.[30] Dempsey was involved in education, youth and culture initiatives in Calgary, particularly in relation to the Calgary Stampede. Her activities connected to the Calgary Stampede were primarily through her involvement with the Indian Events Committee, and as a shareholder and associate director.[31] Some of her activities include: board member of the Canadian Association for Indian and Eskimo Education (1970-1971), Director of Calgary Women's Canadian Club (1970-1971), Member of Senate- University of Calgary (1974-1976), Board member of Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (1981-1982). [32] Dempsey became the first recipient in 1987 of the Chief David Crowchild Award (presented to an individual who was involved in strategies for the betterment of Indian-white relations) from the City of Calgary.[33]

Jenny Margetts: Margetts, of Cree ancestry, was born on the Saddle Lake Reserve in 1936.[34] She lost her Native Status in 1960 after marrying a non-Native man and she regained her status in 1985.[35] Margetts moved to Edmonton in 1960 shortly after her marriage.[36] She was involved with the Alberta committee of the *IRIW*. She was an advocate for Aboriginal language and cultural courses in Edmonton schools, in particular she set up the first Native Kindergarten in Edmonton at Prince Charles School in 1972.[37] Margetts passed away in October of 1991.[38]

Lillian Shirt (Piche): Shirt, of Cree ancestry, was born in Saddle Lake, Alberta on March 2, 1940.[39] She left her home in 1954, when she was fourteen years old, to receive treatment for tuberculosis at Charles Camsell Hospital.[40] Shirt was an activist for Aboriginal people throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Some of her experiences included taking part in the 1969 Alcatraz Island occupation by Native Americans in the United States, which was an action

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. James Gladstone was president of the Indian Association of Alberta from 1950 to 1953 and from 1956 to 1957 and later was appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1958 under the leadership of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. Heritage Community Foundation: Alberta Online Encyclopedia, "Indian Association of Alberta,' (2005) http://www.abheritage.ca/abpolitics/people/influindian.html [19 March 2007].
[31] Dempsey, interview, July 4, 2006.
[32] Pauline Dempsey, resume, Calgary, Alberta.
[33] Pauline Dempsey, resume, Calgary, Alberta.
[34] Newspaper Clippings, "Edmonton Journal: 'Native Women's Champion Dies of Cancer at age 55', Monday October 21, 1991," (Edmonton, Alberta: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Newspaper Clippings, "Edmonton Journal: 'Native Women's Champion Dies of Cancer at age 55,' October 21, 1991," (Edmonton: City of Edmonton Archives, 1968-2004).
[38] Ibid.
[39] Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 4, 2006.
[40] Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, July 4, 2006.

intended to create the island as a symbol of the lands once ruled by "Indians".[41] After she got back to Canada, she lived in Chief Robert Smallboy's Camp for five years.[42]

Muriel Stanley Venne: Venne (nee Kopp), who is Métis, was born on December 12, 1937 in Lamont, Alberta, about 65 kilometers northeast of Edmonton (and resided in Whitford, Alberta).[43] Venne worked with the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA), and there she was instrumental in the formation of the Native Outreach Program in Edmonton which was designed to address social issues on behalf of Aboriginal people, including housing and employment.[44] She was appointed to the Alberta Human Rights Commission in 1973[45] under Premier Peter Lougheed,[46] Venne received the Justice award from the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation in 2004 in recognition of her advocacy for rights of Aboriginal women.[47] In 2005, Venne received the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Person's Case, and received the Order of Canada the same year.[48] She was also the founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, an organization committed to address issues and to celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal women.[49]

Rose Yellow Feet: "Mianistohkomiaakii" was born March 12, 1927 on the Blood Indian Reserve.[50] Some of her activities included working at McDougall House and Hilltop House, which were shelters for women in Edmonton, Alberta.[51] Apart from her extensive involvement in *VANWS*, Yellow Feet was involved in the founding and creation of the Nechi Institute (Alcohol Treatment Centre), and was also involved with the Edmonton Friendship Centre.[52] Yellow Feet served as an elder for the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and the National Addiction Awareness Committee.[53] Rose passed away in February 2006. Muriel Stanley Venne reflected on the words of Yellow Feet

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[41] Ibid. Also, the 1969 Alcatraz Island occupation was outlined further in: Anthony J. Hall, The American Empire and the Fourth World (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, c2003), 267.
[42] Lillian Shirt, interview by Corinne George, July 4, 2006. Chief Robert Smallboy left Hobbema Indian Reserve in 1968 with seventeen followers while requesting land for a reserve settlement. They settled on a 10 acre piece of land outside of Nordegg, Alberta. One of his main goals was to return to living in the way of his ancestors. In 1975, the group numbered 140 people. "Smallboy's 'Squatters' Vow to 'Stay'" The Native People May 30, 1975.
[43] Muriel Stanley Venne, interview by Corinne George, tape recording, Edmonton, Alberta, July 18, 2006.
[44] Ibid.
[45] "Lougheed Announces Human Rights Commission Appointments," The Native People November 9, 1973, p. 1,2.
[46] Premier Peter Lougheed (Conservative) was Premier of Alberta from 1971-1985. Gerald Hallowell, ed, The Oxford Companion to Canadian History (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004), 705.
[47] Venne, interview, July 18, 2006.
[48] Venne, interview, July 18, 2006.
[49] Ibid.
[50] "Rosie Kate Yellow Feet," Lethbridge Herald: Obituaries March 2006.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

during a speech made at an Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women conference, "We all have mountains to climb, rest if you must, but never give up."[54]

[54] Ibid.

APPENDIX B

The Doctrine of Assimilation

"The doctrine of assimilation was based on four dehumanizing (and incorrect) ideas about Aboriginal peoples and their cultures:

- That they were inferior peoples that they were unable to govern themselves and that colonial and Canadian authorities knew best how to protect their interests and well-being
- That the special relationship of respect and sharing enshrined in the treaties was an historical anomaly with no more force or meaning
- That European ideas about progress and development were self-evidently correct and could be imposed on Aboriginal people without reference to any other values and opinions- let alone rights they might possess "

Excerpt from:

Government of Canada, "Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, People to People, Nation to Nation: Looking Forward, Looking Back," (Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/rpt/lk_e.html (accessed June 30, 2007).

APPENDIX D

Questions for oral history interviews:
"Grassroots Activism of Aboriginal Women in Calgary and Edmonton, 1951-1985"

1) Please state your full name.

2) What is your date of birth?

3) Where were you born?

4) What is your Aboriginal affiliation?

5) Would you identify yourself as treaty, Bill-C-31, status or non-status, or Métis?

6) If you were born outside of Calgary or Edmonton, please describe your move to Calgary or Edmonton.

7) What do you remember most vividly about your arrival?

8) The topic for our discussion is Aboriginal women's grassroots activism from 1951-1985. Can you explain how you were involved in Aboriginal women's grassroots activism?

9) Were there influences (people, situations, circumstances) that sparked your involvement in grassroots activism?

10) Do you think you have influenced other people? If yes, in what ways?

11) How did you become involved with this organization/movement?

12) Describe some of you memories of the experience. Did they affect your life? If yes, how did the experiences affect your life?

13) What role did the movement you were involved in play in Aboriginal community? Mainstream community? Province? Nation?

14) What were the results? Personally? Professionally? Politically?

15) What was the impact of the results?

16) Is there anything you would like to add?

17) Do you have any questions for me?