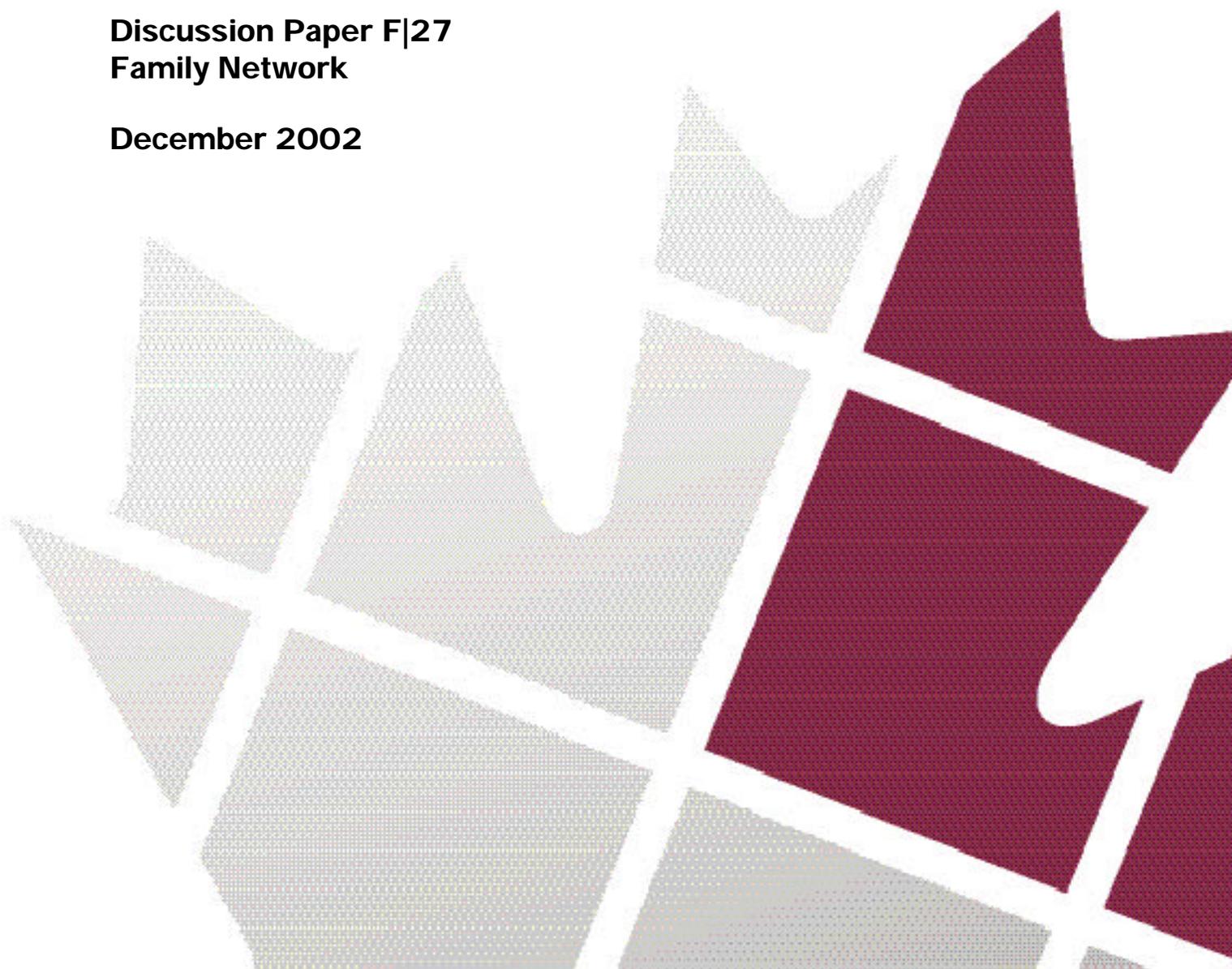# Aboriginal Communities and Urban Sustainability

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# Aboriginal Communities and Urban Sustainability

By

Katherine A.H. Graham and Evelyn Peters

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# Foreword

It is now widely acknowledged that Canada's cities need help if they are to reach their economic potential and offer a high quality of life to their citizens. Indeed, there is growing evidence that social and economic conditions have deteriorated for many urban citizens, the most vulnerable being single-parent families, Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, visible minorities, elderly women, and the disabled.

Major questions remain as to what kind of help the cities need and from whom. And here much attention has turned to the federal government, even though the constitution says that municipalities are the "creatures" of the provinces, and most provinces guard this role jealously.

To help clarify the potential roles for Ottawa, CPRN commissioned four papers. The first four focus on urban poverty, immigration, Aboriginal people, and housing. A fifth provides an overview of the ideas in the first four papers, and includes the reflections of a diverse group of Canadians from many sectors who participated in a Roundtable. Each of the papers provides a summary of the state of knowledge in their area and then sets out possible actions for the federal government.

All four papers point to the challenges of governance of our cities. And, despite the constitutional division of powers, there is no question that the federal government is one of the key actors in Canada's cities by virtue of the fact that so many people live in cities and so much economic activity takes place there. The government is an actor as an employer, as a regulator, as a source of transfer payments to individuals, and as a taxing authority which sets many of the incentives with respect to social and economic behaviour. However, the federal government is only one of many actors. None of the policy actors – federal, provincial, municipal, corporate or voluntary – is in a position to function effectively on its own. The actions of all the actors are part of a densely woven fabric of governance which shapes the economic and social sustainability of cities.

This paper, by Katherine Graham and Evelyn Peters, explores the relationship between Aboriginal people, Aboriginal communities and cities, as well as the policy implications of that relationship. I would like to thank the authors for their excellent survey of the literature, their thoughtful proposals and their active participation in the Roundtable, as well as Leslie Seidle, who ably conceived, organized, and edited all the papers during a six-month assignment with CPRN. I also wish to thank the funders, listed at the end of the document, who provided essential financial support for the project.


Judith Maxwell
December 2002

## Executive Summary

This paper explores the relationship between Aboriginal individuals, Aboriginal Peoples and city life, as well as the policy implications of that relationship. We set this discussion in the context of the new focus on cities as central to Canada's economic and social well-being.

In our view, there are four key characteristics of the current policy milieu. First, is the jurisdictional maze that both contributes to and is an outcome of how we have defined the urban Aboriginal *problematique*. This maze is constructed both through our federal system and through the confounding and conflicting distinctions that past policy and jurisprudence have applied to Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal people.

The second element is that we are developing a more nuanced understanding of the characteristics of Aboriginal people living in cities. From a policy perspective, it is crucial that we recognize that the urban Aboriginal population in Canada is not distinct from the "non-urban." They are interconnected in terms of mobility, culture and politics. As we look at individual cities, it is important that we inform policy choices by acknowledging that, in many cases, the population is neither ghettoized nor uniformly disadvantaged. There is capacity in the population as a result of increasing levels of education and the emergence of a middle class. This means that we need to think about the urban Aboriginal policy agenda as focusing on more than poverty and social dislocation, although those remain important. Issues of culture and recognition are also central.

The third element of our nascent policy understanding is the (re)emergence of a more holistic understanding of what makes cities vital and how urban policy processes need to work. We refer here to the emergence of the governance paradigm and an increasing understanding that, even from the perspective of national policy, locally-driven initiatives can be very responsive to immediate problems. The National Homelessness Initiative, the Interim Report of the Sgro Task Force and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy all point to the idea that a good collaborative relationship between the federal government and the local community can also build additional policy understanding and capacity at both levels.

We conclude by offering some suggested approaches for federal policy development related to Canada's urban Aboriginal fact. We recommend that the federal government take the lead by dealing with some of the fundamental issues related to Aboriginal distinctions – Status and non-Status issues and the access of Métis and non-Status Indians to federal programs. Also fundamental is the need for the federal government to engage actively with and provide appropriate support to all First Nations governments as they deal more directly with their off-reserve people.

As for the challenges of social cohesion and diversity, the demographic profile of Aboriginal people in cities suggests that special efforts should be placed on initiatives that respond to the circumstances of Aboriginal women, youth and children in cities. We suggest that urban Aboriginal service initiatives emphasize equitable access to services, rather than requiring status-blind approaches. A focus on labour force preparation and support and on ameliorating pressing housing issues for the urban Aboriginal population will enhance the economic circumstances of

the urban Aboriginal population and the economic and social prospects of Canadian cities themselves. The Government of Canada can also play a constructive role by fostering inter-cultural understanding between Aboriginal people and others, and by supporting urban Aboriginal service providers as they attempt to learn from each other and build their capacity.

Finally, we examine two institutional options the federal government might use to exercise the policy and program leadership required – both horizontally, within the federal government, and vertically, in the intergovernmental context. These are: appointment of a new Minister of Aboriginal Relations with responsibility for overall policy leadership on Aboriginal matters, including the urban dimension; or, alternatively expanding the mandate of the current Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development specifically to include urban matters. We conclude that the first option, recommended originally by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, is more appropriate to meet the goal of improving the conditions of Aboriginal people in urban communities (and, by extension, elsewhere) and to foster healthy and prosperous cities.

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Katherine A.H. Graham[1] and Evelyn Peters[2]

## I.  Introduction

The relationship of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Peoples[3] to cities and city life is very complex.  The "urban Aboriginal fact" has a significant impact on cities – perhaps most visibly in Western Canada.  In many Western cities positive futures for urban areas are intricately tied to positive futures for Aboriginal people.  Aboriginal people are an essential component of future labour force development and the shape of urban cultures.  Even where their populations are smaller, projected growth rates make Aboriginal people an important force.  Equally important, cities, as social and economic magnets, as places of refuge, as service centres and, increasingly, as "home" also exert a significant impact on Canada's Aboriginal population.  In the broadest terms, we need to understand the conditions under which the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and people and the nation's cities can be as constructive as possible.  The goal is to improve the conditions of Aboriginal people in cities (and, by extension, elsewhere) and to foster healthy and prosperous cities.

The 1951 Census of Canada showed that approximately seven percent of the Aboriginal population lived in cities.  By 1996, that proportion had increased to nearly 50 percent.  According to the 1996[4] Census, 395,000 of the 799,000 individuals in Canada who said they identified as Aboriginal people lived in urban areas.[5]  Of the total Aboriginal population, approximately one-third (33%) lived in Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), that is, cities with a population of 100,000 or more; and 21 percent lived in small urban areas (Siggner, 2001).  Urbanization patterns varied by Aboriginal group.  The proportion of non-Status Indians living in urban areas was highest, at 73 percent, followed by 66 percent of Métis, 40 percent of Registered Indians,[6] and less than 30 percent of Inuit.

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The authors would like to thank Jane Jenson, Anne B. McAllister and Leslie Seidle for helpful comments on an earlier draft.  Any errors of fact and all interpretations are our responsibility.

[3]  Throughout this paper we use the term Aboriginal Peoples in reference to collectives, most generally defined as Indians, Inuit and Métis.  Use of the term Aboriginal people refers to individuals who self-identify as Aboriginal.

[4]  The 2001 census information on Aboriginal people has not yet been released.

[5]  Urban areas have minimum populations of 1,000 and a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre, based on the previous census population count.

[6]  This number for Registered Indians does not include individuals living on reserves in urban areas.  These totals are small.  Moreover, enumeration was interrupted or not permitted on 77 Indian reserves and settlements, and as a result the proportion for Registered Indians is probably slightly inflated.

In 1996, Aboriginal people as a proportion of the total CMA population varied substantially, and Prairie cities had the largest percentages of their populations that were Aboriginal (Table 1). However Aboriginal people also make up a significant proportion of the population of some smaller cities. For example, they comprise 4.7 percent of the North Bay population, 4.3 percent of the Sault Ste. Marie population, 5.9 percent of the Thunder Bay population, 5.2 percent of the Kamloops population, and 6.9 percent of the Prince George population.

This paper explores the relationship between Aboriginal people, Aboriginal Peoples and city life, as well as the policy implications of that relationship. The challenges of this relationship are reinforced and augmented by our increasing policy focus on cities, social cohesion and diversity, and economic competitiveness and prosperity. We begin with the new focus on cities. We then discuss the issues of Aboriginal status and jurisdiction that have historically framed urban Aboriginal issues. In our view, these issues have contributed in a major way to the public policy challenges and, dare we say it, the historical policy vacuum regarding urban Aboriginal people in Canada. We then proceed to examine the socio-demographic profile and dynamics of urban Aboriginal life. These two foundations – the jurisdictional and demographic – illuminate contemporary policy challenges. Beginning with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, there have been a number of recent efforts to examine the urban Aboriginal fact in Canada and to recommend or undertake action. We proceed to examine these in order to identify progress and outstanding issues. We conclude with a discussion of remaining challenges. Despite good-hearted efforts, some of these challenges are very fundamental as we think about how the structure of the Canadian state serves cities and the country's Aboriginal population.


## II. Aboriginal People and the New Urban Focus in Canada

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of cities to Canada's economic and social well-being. As Statistics Canada headlined, when it released the first results of the 2001 Census, we are now overwhelmingly urban, with 79.4 percent of our population living in urban centres with more than 10,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2002). Recent commentary on public policy and governance at all levels has focused on the good, the bad and the downright ugly of Canadian cities. This new urban focus is not unique to Canada, although it has special characteristics, including the urban Aboriginal dimension. In this section, we summarize some of the relevant ideas of what has been more generally termed "the new urbanism" that might be brought to bear on public policy designed to foster a constructive relationship to improve the conditions of urban Aboriginal people and to highlight ways they can contribute to making our cities healthy and prosperous. These ideas relate to the governance of cities, social cohesion and diversity in the urban milieu, and urban competitiveness. They emerge both from observation and from normative ideas concerning the requisites for healthy cities in contemporary times.

**The Governance of Cities**

Central to the new focus on cities is the realization that the pursuit of collective purpose for good city life is a shared responsibility. This is the essence of the "governance paradigm" as it is applied in the urban context (Graham and Phillips, 1998). For our purposes, this paradigm has five major elements. First, is the idea that the collective responsibility for guiding city affairs is shared among governments and among the other sectors of society. In the Canadian context, this means all governments and the private and voluntary sectors.

The second element singles out a new role for city governments in this relationship. Urban governments are no longer viewed as service providers. Instead, they are seen as having an important public policy role, by virtue of their ability to convene, observe and analyze the local context. This is a new role for city governments, traditionally seen as the "construction and maintenance workers" in our federal system.

Concurrent with this new image of city governments is a changed conception of the role of other governments in the federal system. This is a normative element of the governance paradigm that suggests that the federal and provincial/territorial governments should see their role as enabling and supporting, rather than dictating and supervising.

The final two elements of the urban governance paradigm relate to the conception of urban citizenship. The increasing diversity of the urban population and changing concepts of social belonging require a focus both on urban neighbourhoods, as geographic spaces, and on communities of interest based on a variety of affiliations. This has been a major factor that has influenced the emergence of the final element of the paradigm, new ways of citizen engagement in cities – sometimes, but by no means always, led by city governments.

**Social Cohesion and Diversity**

The increasing ethno-cultural diversity of Canadian cities has been a major influence on development of the new governance paradigm. It also, however, deserves separate attention in the context of thinking about the new urban focus in Canada. Generally speaking, the diversity of Canada's urban population has been a cause for celebration. It has enriched our culture significantly, in cities and beyond, and contributed to the labour force development that is central to our prosperity. As our demographic review will show, however, there are disparities among different elements of the urban population. Aboriginal people in cities tend to be more disadvantaged than newly arrived immigrant groups. Furthermore, stereotyping of people from different origins, induced by lack of information and understanding and, in some cases, downright racism have contributed to discrimination and conflict. This is not confined to Aboriginal people in cities, but important examples of discrimination and racism against Aboriginal people have been well documented.

All of this raises the general challenge for city dwellers and public policy makers of how to foster the most constructive dynamic between celebrating and respecting diversity and instilling social cohesion around some common elements of a good civic culture and prosperous city life. The role of voluntary organizations in this quest may be central. Fostering a healthy voluntary sector that can provide culturally sensitive services and act as an effective interlocutor in more general policy discussions is thought to be vital in meeting this challenge.

**Economic Competitiveness**

For our purposes, there are three central ideas associated with new approaches to urban economic development and competitiveness that possibly inform policy directions on urban Aboriginal issues (see also Bradford, 2002).

The first relates to analysis of the importance of human capital in the "post-Fordist city," as described by Mayer and others (Mayer, 1995; Hill and Nowak, 2002). Mayer points to the danger of a split population – those participating in the "new economy" and those, literally and figuratively, left behind in the new increasingly footloose economic age. Given our understanding of the age profile of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada, the prospect of a potential flood of young people into the urban labour market presents both opportunities and challenges for Canadian cities, especially Western cities. On the one hand, policy choices must focus on the need to provide education and labour market training that assist Aboriginal people in cities, particularly youth, to participate in the economic market place. On the other hand, the public policy agenda must also consider the fact that not all will be willing or able to participate in the mainstream market economy of cities and the world. The prospect of economic development breeding social exclusion is very real and has been studied in the urban context elsewhere (Boddy, 2002). If we recognize that economic and social exclusion are continuing possibilities for urban Aboriginal people, then we need policy ideas to mitigate that. To what extent does our public policy agenda include capacity for community economic development (CED)? This is the second relevant element of the new economic agenda.

Finally, the new model of urban competitiveness can be described as being much more holistic than earlier models that focused on the construction of specific types of infrastructure as the key to urban economic development. Infrastructure is important, to be sure. We are now seeing, however, broader interest in "the livable city" as the desirable city.[7] This includes good transportation and environmental services as well as diversity, a sense of public safety, respect for natural amenities and endowments, and a vital cultural and creative life (Florida, 2002). We raise this because this concept of "the whole city" is consistent with ideas in various Aboriginal cultures about the importance of balance and "the whole." Creating the space for Aboriginal culture and perspectives to contribute to the "whole city" may be an important key to future economic development. This may be especially important in Western cities, where the Aboriginal population is so visible and significant as a proportion of the total population.

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[7]   It should be stated that this is by no means a new idea. Think of the early work by Jane Jacobs, for example and, going back to ancient times, the conception of Greek and Roman cities. As with many things, our contemporary interest is more a re-discovery.

## III. Turning to the Basics:  Status and Jurisdiction

Addressing issues of status and jurisdiction are foundational to moving forward on issues related to Aboriginal people and urban sustainability.  The history of relations between Aboriginal Peoples and the Crown and the template of Canadian federalism shape the situation of Aboriginal people in our cities in profound and, to the uninitiated, confusing ways.  We do not pretend to provide expert legal analysis of constitutional and case law here.  We do, however, think that some basic concepts and developments in the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal people and Canadian governments at all levels are required in order to set the stage for contemporary policy analysis.

**Aboriginal Peoples and the Crown**

Historically, the relationship between the Crown and Aboriginal Peoples has revolved around issues of land and title to land and a fiduciary trust, related to land and other fundamental matters (Graham, Dittburner and Abele, 1996).  The *Royal Proclamation of 1763* is considered as a seminal document that sets out this relationship between the Crown and Indians.[8]  A more contemporary statement of this special relationship is the recognition of Aboriginal Peoples as having "existing aboriginal and treaty rights," under section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.  Indians, Inuit and Métis are designated as having these rights.  An important outcome of section 35(1) is that the courts are engaged in further interpretation of which Aboriginal groups hold what rights, based on existing treaties and other evidence of existing Aboriginal rights.

The process of settlement of what is now Canada was accompanied by negotiation of treaties to clarify the issue of land ownership and provide for a transfer of lands to the Crown, with recognition of "reserved lands" for Aboriginal People and accompanying rights.  These rights have been land-related – for example, the right to hunting and gathering.  There is an economic dimension to some treaties, through commitment by the Crown to provide gear for harvesting activities.  In Treaty 6, which spans mid-Saskatchewan and Alberta, there is the contested provision of "a medicine chest" that treaty members argue constitutes the right of access to full health care (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 2: 78).  In the Prairie provinces, these treaties have permitted colonial settlement and ultimately the relatively unfettered development of cities.

**Confederation and the Federal Role**

With the creation of Canada as a federal state in 1867, the Crown became bifurcated.  Under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the federal government was given responsibility for "Indians and the Lands reserved for the Indians."  The provinces were given responsibilities for public lands, health, welfare, education, administration of justice and municipal institutions (section 92).  This division of responsibilities and the establishment of all municipalities as creations of provincial statute put in place major elements of the urban Aboriginal public policy maze.

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[8]  In *Re: Eskimo* (1939), the Supreme Court of Canada determined that under s. 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, Inuit were Indians and therefore under the legislative authority of the federal Parliament.

This maze was made significantly more difficult to navigate by the federal government's *Indian Act* and by its interpretation of section 91(24). Passage of the first *Indian Act* in 1876 put in place a regime of distinctions among Aboriginal Peoples that politically, administratively and viscerally divide Aboriginal people to this day (Gibbins, 1997: 21-22). As federal policy developed, Métis were separated from "Indians" and their rights were extinguished through the issuing of scrip (certificates that could be exchanged for land or money). For "Indians" the key distinction was between "Status" and "non-Status" Indians. The source of "Status" is membership or very specified historical connection to an Indian band, an administratively defined collective for the delivery of services. Typically, the band was tied to a reserve. The federal government has historically taken the policy position that its section 91(24) responsibilities relate to Indians *on* land reserved for Indians, rather than all Status Indians on or off reserve and, after 1939, to Inuit. Furthermore, it has been loath to extend its reach of action to non-Status Indians or to Métis.

Across Canada, the reserve/band system has shaped cities profoundly and in different ways. In some cases, for example Fredericton, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver, there are long-established reserves adjacent to or within city limits. This has required mutual accommodation and adjustment around issues of servicing, taxation of non-band members living on reserve, and general good neighbourliness and tolerance. The checkered history of these relations is well known. Even more significant, however, is the impact of the *Indian Act*, as a catalyst for social dysfunction and migration off reserve, and for cutting adrift those who leave and those Aboriginal people who do not have status. As will be seen, this is the significant majority of Aboriginal people in Canada and in our cities.

Although constitutional arrangements and the strictures of the *Indian Act* are rooted in the 19th century, four more contemporary public policy developments at the federal level significantly affect the political and socio-economic circumstances of Aboriginal people in urban Canada. These are: extension of post-secondary education support to Status Indians living off-reserve; Bill C-31; the 1999 Corbière Decision of the Supreme Court of Canada; and the ongoing effort of the federal government to separate the connection between rights-based entitlements for Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal people and improvement of Aboriginal conditions.

One of the ironic cruelties of the 19th century *Indian Act* was that Indians who attained higher education lost their status (Castellano, 2000: 171). Thankfully, this provision is now gone and the Government of Canada has been investing significantly in the support of First Nations and Inuit people who want to pursue post-secondary education. "As a matter of social policy"[9] the Government of Canada has extended eligibility for this support to Status Indians living off-reserve, as well as those on-reserve and Inuit. In 2000-01, $293 million was devoted to tuition, travel and other financial assistance for participants. The impact of this funding on First Nations and Inuit educational attainment is significant. Federal statistics indicate that the percentage of Aboriginal people aged 20 to 29 with a post-secondary degree or diploma improved from 19 to 23 percent between 1981 and 1996.[10] With few exceptions, post-secondary institutions are located in urban Canada. Thus, the pursuit of higher education is an important draw to cities.

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[9]    www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/eduense_e.html. Accessed July 15, 2002.
[10]   Ibid. It is unclear whether this figure refers to all Aboriginal people or those eligible for funding. Non-status Indians and Métis remain ineligible.

Interestingly, for those already residing off-reserve in urban areas, accessing funds under the Post-Secondary Education program may require some adroit or persistent action. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which is charged with responsibility for the program, has devolved administrative responsibility for almost all of the funds to First Nations governments, which are reserve-based and largely reserve-focused.

The definition of Status versus non-Status Indian and of Métis and Indian was further blurred by passage of Bill C-31 to amend the *Indian Act* in 1985. In colloquial terms, the purpose of Bill C-31 was to redress injustices around loss of status. Its main beneficiaries were Indian women who had lost status as a result of marriage to a non-Status person, and their children. This was done by separating status from band membership. Bands were to be protected from an influx of population on-reserve and claims on band housing and other resources by a provision that allowed bands to adopt their own membership code and assume responsibility for maintaining membership lists. Implementation of Bill C-31 has been extremely difficult for all involved (RCAP, 1996b, Vol. 4: 33-52) Many more people applied for reinstatement than estimated. Pressures on bands to recognize new members and accord them eligibility for housing and access to post-secondary funding were intense. This led, in turn, to significant disputes related to band-determined membership codes. The geographic and political space between those with newly-acquired status, many of whom had been pushed to urban areas as a result of their past disenfranchisement, and those on-reserve became more rugged. In some cases, there was major political conflict between "C-31 Indians" and band leadership, including conflict over the very right to live on-reserve.

Since 1985, the federal government's policy response to the increasingly complex jurisdictional maze has been heavily influenced by the courts. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered the Corbière decision which gave the right of band members living off-reserve to vote in band elections and referendums, in cases where band elections were held under the provisions of the *Indian Act*. The Corbière case was born from the frustration of the off-reserve status experience. The recently introduced *First Nations Governance Act* (tabled June 14, 2002) takes implementation of Corbière further. It requires all First Nations, including those with their own election codes, to "respect the interests of all band members and … balance their different interests, including the interests of on- and off-reserve members. It also requires ratification of these codes by on- and off-reserve members."[11]

From all of the above, we can see that the federal government is at the centre of public policy concerning Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal people. With some notable exceptions, such as support for post-secondary education and extended health care benefits, the focus has been on Status Indians, living on-reserve, and Inuit. This is very openly the focus of the federal government's main administrative arm on the Aboriginal file – the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Induced by the courts and, in some instances by social policy, the government has turned its attention off-reserve but, even in these cases, its focus is largely on Status Indians and Inuit. These groups are important components of the urban Aboriginal population but, as we will show, people who self-identify as Aboriginal but lack

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[11]    www.fng-gpn.gc.ca/FNGA.  Leadership Selection Code.  Accessed July 11, 2002.

"status" are often the face of urban Aboriginal Canada.[12]  These include Métis, who have as yet ill-defined rights under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and "non-Status Indians" who are in jurisdictional limbo.  It should now be evident that the jurisdictional lens that the Government of Canada has historically used to guide its Aboriginal policy reflects a different demographic and political reality than now exists.  This disconnect becomes even more evident in light of provincial and local government politics and Aboriginal Canada.

Two examples of recent federal thinking with respect to policy for urban Aboriginal issues should be noted here, though.  They are the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) and the work of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues, commonly known as the Sgro Task Force.  Both are works in progress and it is conceivable that new thinking will inform their fundamental and specific directions as they wind through the system.

First announced in 1998, the UAS has focused on developing specific collaborative arrangements and agreements between the federal government, other governments and local Aboriginal groups in order to better coordinate programs and services.  The agenda has focused on socio-economic improvement.  The UAS has also sought to improve coordination within the federal government, both in Ottawa and in the provinces, via the Federal Councils of senior regional officials.  A second version of the UAS is currently under development.  Generally speaking, it is likely to focus on "doing better" on the priorities established in 1998, especially in key cities with a very substantial Aboriginal population.

The Sgro Task Force released its Interim Report in April 2002 and is due to report to the Prime Minister by the end of 2002.  The Task Force considered what it believed to be the salient characteristics of the urban Aboriginal population for federal policy.  It has focused on socio-economic disadvantage, issues related to homelessness and housing supports for Aboriginal people in cities and the very visible issues of Aboriginal life in Western cities.  The Task Force recommended that the UAS be strengthened, much along the lines described above.  Some of the Sgro Task Force's recommendations would begin to change the way the federal government has historically approached programming for Aboriginal people.

**Provincial Perspectives**

It is reasonable to suggest that provincial governments have been reluctant players in Aboriginal policy.  The standard provincial position is that Status Indians on-reserve are the responsibility of the federal government and that those choosing to live off-reserve, as well as Métis and non-Status people, are "citizens of the province" like any other.  Provincial governments would all reject any suggestion by the federal government or from any other source that the provincial Crown has any responsibility specifically related to Aboriginal Peoples or Aboriginal people.

The extent to which specific provincial governments have been steely-eyed as they have spoken this line has varied with the government of the day.  Interestingly, this has not related solely to placement on the "left-right" political spectrum.  For example, the Government of Alberta has a history of undertaking some very practical initiatives in the family services and youth justice

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[12]    There are some federal programs that are specifically urban in focus.  Chief among these, Canadian Heritage supports Aboriginal Friendship centres in cities and towns across the country.

areas that reflect awareness of the urban Aboriginal reality (Abele and Graham, 1989).  More recently, the Canada West Foundation has found that all of the Western provinces had programs aimed specifically at Aboriginal people in their urban centres.  These programs were all in the fields of education and justice.  Most provinces also had programs in other fields (Hanselmann, 2002b: 6).  As of late 2001, two of the Western provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, have government-wide policy statements that deal with their respective urban Aboriginal realities (Hanselmann, 2001: 13-14).  At the other end of the spectrum of involvement, the provincial government in Ontario, which also has urban centres with significant Aboriginal population, has been loath to engage in policy or program discussions in recent years.

**Urban Government Perspectives**

In important respects, Canada's urban governments are simultaneously closest to and farthest away from jurisdictional potency on urban Aboriginal matters.  They are made close by virtue of the fact that urban Aboriginal issues are most immediate and, regrettably, very often problematic for city governments.  Hence, Aboriginal people in cities "may think of themselves as being under an urban *authority* (primarily defined by their encounters with police and the municipal inspectorate), rather than as being served by an urban *government*" (Graham, 1999: 380).  They are made farthest away by the constitutional status of municipalities as "creatures of provincial governments." Over time, individual provinces have exhibited varying inclinations to shape the size, areas of jurisdiction and financial capacity of city governments to respond to the needs of their residents and make their city a good place to live.  Since the mid-1990s, however, bold moves by a number of provinces to amalgamate municipalities or to regionalize important services, for example health care, combined with downloading of service responsibilities to the local level without giving municipal governments the requisite financial capacity, have been the major preoccupation of Canada's city governments.  This has both prompted increased local awareness of the situation of the Aboriginal population – especially the homeless and those otherwise disadvantaged – and swamped city governments' ability to deal with the situation.  To some degree, this has reflected the fact that Canada's city governments are at the end of the fiscal food chain, as provinces were forced into reacting to the social and health spending cutbacks of the 1995 federal budget.

A second reason why urban governments are far away from the full scope of the urban Aboriginal agenda is that they are very distant politically from acting on the basis of a pan-Canadian rights-based agenda.  Aside from cleaving to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and complying with equity legislation that defines Aboriginal people as a designated group, municipal governments are out of the "rights game."  They have neither the capacity nor, generally speaking, the desire to work in the domain of "affirming existing Aboriginal and treaty rights." The closest that city governments have come to doing this is through some Western cities' participation in the process of establishing new "urban reserves" under the *Indian Act* (Barron and Garcea, 1999: 289-309).   The creation of urban reserves is a significant development.  However, municipal governments do not hold the fundamental jurisdiction in this area.

One of the standard nostrums about cities and city governments in Canada is that their histories and contemporary circumstances and prospects are many and varied. One size does not fit all. This is the case as we look at the "on the ground" response to the urban Aboriginal population in different centres. In the West, we see a number of urban governments establishing Aboriginal affairs committees to deal with matters of particular interest to the Aboriginal population. Both Edmonton and Calgary have Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committees. The City of Toronto also has an Aboriginal Advisory Committee. These have exhibited varying degrees of activism and impact at the municipal council table (Hanselmann, 2001; RCAP, 1996a). In two cases, Vancouver and Winnipeg, municipal governments have been signatory to tri-level agreements intended to tackle complex problems of blight and social decay in areas of their respective cities that have a preponderance of Aboriginal residents. These are the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver and the core/North Main area of Winnipeg.

At the national level, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has exhibited some interest in Aboriginal issues, most notably at the time of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. One outcome was the establishment of a Centre for Municipal-Aboriginal Relations in 1997 "to promote effective relations between municipal and First Nations Governments and their respective communities" (Graham, 1999: 387). However, that centre is now closed.

We began this discussion by alluding to the jurisdictional maze in which most of Canada's urban Aboriginal people live. It is a maze that is both dense and has significant holes. Before moving much further, then, we need to understand how Aboriginal People and Aboriginal people have come together to deal with this situation.

**Aboriginal People, Aboriginal Organizations and City Life**

If we look at our federal system and think about the involvement of Aboriginal Peoples in public policy making, we can see that there is an established constellation of Aboriginal political organizations that represent the major Aboriginal groupings within Canada and that, to some degree, shadow the federal-provincial-territorial relationship.

At the national level, the most active in the urban context have been the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), which defines itself as representing non-Status and off-reserve individuals; the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which sees itself as the national voice for Canada's Status Indians; and the Métis National Council, which is working to affirm Métis rights more generally. The AFN's stated interest in urban issues is relatively recent, sparked in part by assumption of responsibility for off-reserve member services by some First Nations Governments. For example, the Siksika Blackfoot provide social services to off-reserve members in Calgary. The extension of post-secondary support to Status Indians off-reserve and Bill C-31 issues have also amplified AFN interest in the urban file. In 1999, the AFN established a task force on urban issues. In considering the task force report, the 1999 AFN General Assembly resolved to create an Urban Issues Secretariat within the AFN. That has not yet occurred, however. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) also has a strong interest in urban issues as a result of the preponderance of the off-reserve adult population being female, Bill C-31 and issues of female voice.

There is also a network of Aboriginal political organizations at the provincial and territorial level, lobbying those governments and, in certain circumstances, keeping an eye on national issues. As with the national organizations, these are "identity-based," representing Status Indians, Métis and Inuit where they reside. In addition, some First Nations governments are specifically engaged in political representation on urban issues by virtue of having reserve lands within or adjacent to an urban centre.

Aboriginal political organizations with a potential or an avowed interest in urban Aboriginal policy must be distinguished from urban Aboriginal service providers. They are at the heart of what actually happens in urban centres. Friendship Centres, Aboriginal housing providers and others provide a myriad of services and supports to the local Aboriginal population. They see the situation of the local population on a daily basis and often make heroic efforts to improve circumstances. Hanselmann's (2002a) recent interviews with key people involved with urban Aboriginal people emphasized the need to recognize that existing urban Aboriginal organizations and community leaders had the experience and knowledge to build successful programs.

The policy capacity and advocacy role of Aboriginal service providers is, however, limited by a number of factors. In some cases, there have been tensions between service providers and Aboriginal political organizations that see their role as advocacy in the context of "high politics" (Abele and Graham, 1989). Local service organizations that incorporate as charities are also circumscribed by Canadian charities legislation that restricts any registered charity from devoting more than 10 percent of its budget to advocacy work. Finally, there is the pure weight of what they do, often with very limited resources. Local service providers are heavily reliant on government funds, primarily through contracts and contribution agreements with the provincial and federal governments. This funding base is uncertain. Furthermore, such organizations increasingly face highly complex reporting and accountability requirements that tax organizational energies. Finally, these challenges, combined with the geographic dispersion of service organizations across Canada, make it difficult for these organizations to learn from each other and consider others' "best practices" in the context of their own circumstances and needs.

Another important development is the emergence, in some cities, of umbrella organizations to coordinate services and spearhead important initiatives. In Winnipeg, for example, the Aboriginal Council was central in purchasing Winnipeg's CPR station in the heart of the core area and bringing under one roof a variety of Aboriginal organizations. Named the Aboriginal Centre, this provided a focal point for the urban Aboriginal community. The Council was also instrumental in building the Thunderbird House across the street – a striking building that acts as a cultural and spiritual facility. One important role Thunderbird House attempts to play is that of building bridges between Aboriginal people and those from other cultures. For example, it has hosted a series of collaborative ceremonies with other groups that form a foundation for discussion of similarities and differences in tradition. All of this is in the quest of greater understanding and mutual respect. There are plans to expand the Thunderbird House complex by adding housing and other facilities. (The Aboriginal Council is not affiliated with any of the political groups in the province.) In Vancouver, the Aboriginal People's Council emerged in 1998 to represent off-reserve Aboriginal people, including in policy development and implementation. The Aboriginal People's Council was inclusive, with an explicit mandate to respect the rights and interest of all Aboriginal People, and was established through an

agreement between the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and the BC United Native Nations. In other words, it was connected to a provincial body representing First Nations peoples in the province. Earlier this year the Aboriginal People's Council was disbanded, but discussions are currently underway to re-establish it.

**Status and Jurisdiction: A Brief Conclusion**

Before we examine the socio-demographic profile of Aboriginal people in cities and look at some recent policy directions, the existing maze of status and jurisdiction raises a basic question. If the common and unique aspect of life for Aboriginal people in our cities is the urban dimension of their life, to what extent should the foundation of public policy for these people acknowledge their Aboriginality but otherwise be "status-blind"? This question was hotly debated in representations to the Royal Commission, and the Interim Report of the Sgro Task Force tilts in this direction on housing issues, although it is not a formal recommendation (Sgro, 2002: 22). At this early stage, we will simply put this question on the table, as it flags the central policy issue of how to treat identity and culture in conceiving public policy related to the urban Aboriginal fact.

Some other common themes emerge from this review. First is that, to the extent that urban Aboriginal people have been thought of in public policy, they have largely been the ball in a game of jurisdictional ping pong. The second theme is that the extension of benefits to Aboriginal people in cities – especially in the case of post-secondary education – has been limited. These limitations concern both the extent of coverage (non-Status Indians and Métis are excluded) and the administrative regime used to provide benefits to urban people. We are still in the band government world, and the relationship between off-reserve members in the political life of First Nations government is very much a work in progress. The final theme is that public policy and the process used to make public policy, as it relates to the urban Aboriginal fact, need to work at two fundamental levels. There is a pressing need both to improve the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people living in cities and to create the conditions to give them greater voice in the governance of cities and more broadly. It is tempting to think that a focus on socio-economic improvement in cities is an end in itself that will mute "rights talk" by Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal people who have a stake in urban life. We suggest that this is not necessarily so and that our thinking on public policy related to cities and urban Aboriginal people needs to reflect this dual perspective. The three levels of government and organizations and governments representing urban Aboriginal people share responsibility for this thinking.

# IV. The Socio-Demographic Profile of Aboriginal People in Urban Canada

At the outset of this paper we described the growing proportion of the Aboriginal population currently found in cities. The changing distribution of the Aboriginal population contributes to the increasing diversity of urban areas in Canada but also raises new challenges in terms of needs and jurisdiction. The following sections describe Aboriginal population distributions and the characteristics of urban Aboriginal populations, and attempts to interpret the statistics.

**Population Distributions**

*Sources of Urban Aboriginal Population Growth*

Growth in urban Aboriginal populations has a number of sources. The 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act*, allowing for the reinstatement of individuals and their descendents who had lost status, led to a large increase of Registered Indians in urban areas between 1986 and 1991. While the size of the Registered Indian population is determined by legislation, this does not apply to the Métis or non-Status Indians. Census counts are a function of self-identification. Guimond (1999) suggests that there has been substantial "ethnic mobility" in the Aboriginal population – that is, change in reporting ethnic affiliations between censuses and between generations. This phenomenon seems to be the most important in urban areas and for the Métis identity population between 1991 and 1996. Other sources of growth in the urban Aboriginal population reflect differences between fertility and mortality rates and patterns of intermarriage.

Migration is an important component of population distribution, and Aboriginal people are considerably more mobile than non-Aboriginal people. Between 1991 and 1996, 55 percent of the Aboriginal population in Canada moved, compared to 40 percent of the non-Aboriginal population (Norris, Cooke and Clatworthy, 2002a). Despite these high mobility rates, migration from rural and reserve areas does not appear to be the main contributor to the growth of urban populations. While migration patterns differ slightly for Registered Indians, Métis, and non-Status Indians, between 1991 and 1996 smaller urban areas and CMAs experienced net migration losses at the expense of reserves and rural areas. Net migration flows represent the net loss or gain of population to a particular destination, resulting from migration flows. For contemporary Aboriginal people, the pattern of migration is not one of the depletion of reserves and rural areas as populations move to urban areas. Instead, there is circulation between reserves/rural areas and urban areas.

*Urban Settlement Patterns*

Urban settlement patterns are an important component of the discussion of social cohesion in cities. Are Aboriginal people isolated and segregated in urban areas, or are they mixed with non-Aboriginal populations? The assumption that most urban Aboriginal people are segregated in inner city areas is not supported by the existing analysis. There is relatively little research available on urban Aboriginal settlement patterns. However, Clatworthy's (1996) analysis of the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey data showed that the locational patterns of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations differed, but that levels of segregation were low to moderate. Sizeable concentrations appeared to be typical of only three centres, Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon. In 1996, Winnipeg had one census tract where Aboriginal people made up slightly more than half of the population, and four additional tracts where they made up about one-third of the population. Regina and Saskatoon each had only one census tract where Aboriginal people made up between 30 and 39 percent of the population. Edmonton, with the second-largest urban Aboriginal population, did not have any census tracts where Aboriginal people made up more than 20 percent of the population (Peters, 2001). An analysis of 1996 data (Maxim, *et al.*, 2000) showed that, while Aboriginal people were more likely to be located in central areas in some cities, this was not the only or even the main settlement pattern.

**Population Characteristics**

*Mobility*

Mobility patterns raise some difficult issues with respect to governance and the most appropriate scales at which governance should take place. A number of excellent recent studies provide details about various aspects of Aboriginal mobility patterns (Clatworthy, 1996; Clatworthy and Cooke, 2001; Cooke, 1999; Norris, Cook and Clatworthy, 2002a, 2002b; Norris *et al.*, 2001). This paper can only highlight a few dimensions. These dimensions have to do with mobility rates for urban Aboriginal populations, reasons for migration and migration patterns by gender.

While the Aboriginal population is generally more mobile than the non-Aboriginal population in Canada, the population living in major metropolitan centres is particularly mobile. Between 1991 and 1996, 70 percent of Aboriginal residents in major metropolitan centres moved, with 45 percent changing residences within the same community. In comparison, just under 50 percent of non-Aboriginal residents in major centres moved, with slightly more than 20 percent changing residences within the same community (Norris, Cooke and Clatworthy, 2002a: 231). Residential mobility rates (people who lived in the same community, who changed residence between censuses) were similar for all Aboriginal groups, suggesting that they experienced similar pressures in urban areas (Clatworthy, 1996; Norris, Cooke, and Clatworthy, 2002a). Residential mobility rates were highest for women and lone-parent families, and housing-related issues were the most common reasons for moving.

*Demographic Characteristics*

Aboriginal people in urban areas are culturally diverse, and they are also fragmented by legislative distinctions. The third column in Table 1 gives some hint of this diversity. The non-registered Aboriginal population represents those people who are not registered under the *Indian Act* and therefore do not have access to federal government programs off reserves. This population includes individuals who identify as Indian and as Métis. The Métis population in large metropolitan areas varies from 14 percent of the Aboriginal population in Halifax to 53.9 percent of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, with Prairie cities containing higher proportions of Métis people. Even the registered Indian population is divided by individuals who are band members and those who are not. Band members have the option of living on reserves, if housing is available. Cultural affiliations are also important and, as the statistics from the Royal Commission (RCAP, 1996a: 592-597) showed, urban Aboriginal people belong to many distinct Aboriginal cultural groups.

Aboriginal populations are relatively young. Children under 15 years of age comprised one-third (33 %) of the urban Aboriginal population, compared to 20 percent of the urban non-Aboriginal population. Urban Aboriginal people aged 55 and older made up 7 percent of the urban Aboriginal population; among non-Aboriginal people this group represented 20 percent of the population (Siggner, 2001). However, as Table 1 shows, children under 14 are disproportionately represented relative to the Aboriginal population in all cities. This population represents a sizeable future labour force, and their future can make a positive contribution to economic competitiveness in urban areas.

Women accounted for a greater share (53%) in the Aboriginal population than in the non-Aboriginal population (51%). If we compare male to female ratios for specific age groups, it is clear that Aboriginal women between 25 and 44 were substantially over-represented in most cities. For example, while the male:female ratio for the non-Aboriginal population was close to 1:1 for this age group in all large metropolitan areas, for the Aboriginal population it ranged from 1:1.49 in Thunder Bay to 1:1.06 in Halifax; Prairie cities generally had higher proportions of women relative to men. Aboriginal single parents made up a greater proportion of the Aboriginal population (10%) than the non-Aboriginal population (4%). Most Aboriginal single parents are mother-led (Siggner, 2001). Aboriginal single parents comprise a very significant proportion of lone-parent families in many cities, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and in Thunder Bay (Table 1).

More urban Aboriginal people out of school had not completed high school (48%) compared to non-Aboriginal people (33%). Fewer urban Aboriginal people (6%) had completed a university degree than non-Aboriginal people (17%) (Siggner, 2001). In relation to their proportion of total urban populations, Aboriginal people are over-represented in the population with less than a Grade 12 education. Education, particularly for young Aboriginal people, is an important part of the economic future of Canadian cities.

*Economic Characteristics*

Data from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey showed that the proportion of urban Aboriginal people participating in the labour force was higher than the proportions for rural or reserve areas (RCAP, 1996b: 814). Employment rates were also higher.[13] Nevertheless, urban Aboriginal people do not fare as well economically as non-Aboriginal people in cities. Addressing the needs of the urban Aboriginal population is an essential component of improving the economic competitiveness of urban areas. Improving their employment prospects speaks to two broad policy goals: creating a labour force that has appropriate skills for the contemporary labour market; and reducing the burden on social services resulting from unemployment and economic disenfranchisement more generally.

Data from the 1996 census describe the economic disadvantage of urban Aboriginal people. In general, labour force participation rates were lower and unemployment rates were higher (61% and 22% respectively) for urban Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people (66% and 10% respectively). The average total personal income for the urban Aboriginal population was $15,475, compared to $24,110 for urban non-Aboriginal people. Nearly half of the urban Aboriginal population had incomes below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off, compared to 21 percent of the urban non-Aboriginal population (Siggner, 2001). In most cities, urban Aboriginal people had poverty rates that were higher than those of visible minorities (Table 1). Aboriginal people represent a significant proportion of the total population that is unemployed in Canadian cities. In some Prairie cities, they comprise up to one-quarter of the population that is poor, and in all cities they are over-represented in the poor population relative to their population numbers. Poverty rates are often associated with the high rate of

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[13]    It is not possible to conclude from these statistics that urban areas represent more opportunities. It may be that individuals most likely to take advantage of opportunities are most likely to migrate to cities.

homelessness, ranging between 20 to 50 percent of the total homeless population in major urban centres (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 5-6).

While most of the statistics on urban Aboriginal people point to socio-economic disadvantage, it is important to emphasize that this population is not homogeneous. For example, there are now more than 150,000 Aboriginal people who have completed or are in post-secondary education (Cairns and Flanagan, 2001: 110). The Royal Commission noted that there is a growing Aboriginal middle class of higher-income professionals in cities (RCAP, 1996b: 815). A significant proportion of the urban Aboriginal population earned a good income of $40,000 a year (Table 1).

The characteristics of Aboriginal populations vary considerably. Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon face particularly significant challenges related to poverty and marginalization. It is worth remembering, though, that we do not have published statistics that allow us to examine the situation in smaller cities where Aboriginal people are a significant presence in urban populations. All of these issues underline the need for flexibility in program and policy development aimed at improving the situation among urban Aboriginal peoples.

## V.  Defining the Challenges of Aboriginal Urbanization[14]:  A Review and Evaluation of the Recent Literature

While a profile of urban Aboriginal people provides necessary background, the interpretation of this information is not straightforward. Here we turn our attention to a variety of different approaches that have used the available information to define the challenge that Aboriginal urbanization represents. Definitions of this challenge have varied historically. Peters (1996: 315) argues, based on a review of the literature since the 1950s, that "from the earliest writing on Aboriginal people in cities, their presence was constructed as a problem." Early work defined the major challenge as one of overcoming the cultural mismatch between Aboriginal and urban cultures, and assisting Aboriginal people to adapt to an urban and industrial way of life. There were fears of inner city ghettoization and the burdens on municipal coffers if Aboriginal people were not integrated into urban society. Concerns about cultural adaptation gave way to a focus on poverty and its accompanying social problems after 1980, and perspectives on urban Aboriginal people viewed them primarily as marginalized populations (Peters, 1996: 315-319). Inadequate and inappropriate jurisdictional frameworks for dealing with urban Aboriginal people were also identified in this later literature.[15]

Contemporary research and policy interventions continue to emphasize the marginalization of urban Aboriginal people and the problems associated with government responsibilities for this population. There are four new emphases emerging in contemporary work, though. These include a concern about ghettoization, an emphasis on high mobility rates, a focus on cultural

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[14]   The term "urbanization" refers to the distribution of populations and does not assume a net migration of Aboriginal people into cities.

[15]   We are not arguing for an abrupt paradigm shift here, but a change in emphasis. The various strands of the definition of the "urban Aboriginal question" weave through all of these periods, but emphases shift.

survival in the city and recommendations about "status-blind" delivery of urban services. All of these themes are briefly discussed below.

**Social and Economic Marginalization**

The marginalization of the urban Aboriginal population remains a preoccupation in contemporary studies. The Canadian Council on Social Development's (CCSD) statistical profile of poverty levels showed that urban Aboriginal people were more likely to have incomes below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off than visible minorities in most cities (Lee, 2000). Other reports have similarly emphasized the disadvantage of urban Aboriginal populations (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002; Hanselmann, 2001: 4-8; Sgro, 2002). Poor socio-economic conditions for urban Aboriginal people are particularly pronounced in cities in the Prairie provinces (Drost, 1995; Hanselmann, 2001; Richards, 2001a, 2001b).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to summarize policy and program responses to these characteristics, but Hanselmann's documentation of policies and programs for urban Aboriginal people in Western Canada suggests that there are initiatives in many cities focused on education, training, employment, and housing and homelessness (Hanselmann, 2001: 18; Hanselmann, 2002b: 10). Moreover, the federal government's National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) contains a designated $59 million fund for Aboriginal initiatives. This represents approximately 8 percent of the $753 million to be spent over the life of the initiative. It should be noted that housing policy affecting urban Aboriginal people is not just developed at the federal level. Provincial initiatives related to social housing (or its lack) are important. Further, the implementation of the NHI, particularly the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI), which focuses on emergency shelter and support, follows a community implementation model, often involving municipal governments and local non-profit agencies. While this can mean flexibility in responding to local needs, it also means than policies and programs for urban Aboriginal housing are not developed in a consistent fashion across cities and that programming takes place in the absence of a policy framework (Norris *et al.*, 2001: 32). Creating culturally appropriate programs in the justice system has received considerable attention (Hanselmann, 2001: 18; Hanselmann, 2002b: 10; LaPrairie, 1995).

As the evaluation of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy points out (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 9) most governmental interventions are focused upon individuals. However, some recent work has recommended community development approaches to the poverty and marginalization of urban Aboriginal peoples. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended community development initiatives in urban areas so that the "production of goods and services, expenditure of income and the reinvestment of profit should, as much as possible, be oriented toward the betterment of the community" (RCAP, 1996c: 818). Based on her research on inner city Aboriginal people and the criminal justice system, LaPrairie also emphasizes community development, arguing that community development needs to begin with safe and secure housing to stabilize the inner city population and provide the basis for other types of community development such as economic revitalization and social organization. She notes: "Transient populations in poor, unstable and inappropriate housing are unlikely to effect change in their communities" (LaPrairie, 1995: xvi).

**Jurisdiction and Responsibility**

While debates over government responsibilities for Aboriginal people off-reserves have a very long history (Peters, 2001), the effects of these debates have received increasing attention recently. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996a: 551) noted that:

> Wrangling over jurisdiction has impeded urban Aboriginal people's access to services. Intergovernmental disputes, federal and provincial offloading, lack of program co-ordination, exclusion of municipal governments and urban Aboriginal groups from discussions and negotiations on policy and jurisdictional issues, and confusion regarding the political representation of Aboriginal people in cities have all contributed to a situation that has had serious adverse effects on the ability of Aboriginal people to gain access to appropriate services in urban centres.

The Royal Commission (RCAP, 1996a: 538) found that there were three facets to the problem: urban Aboriginal people do not receive the same level of services as First Nations on-reserve or Inuit in their communities; urban Aboriginal people have difficulty obtaining access to provincial programs available to other urban residents; and urban Aboriginal people would like access to culturally appropriate programming.

Hanselmann's (2001) recent overview of government policies for urban Aboriginal people in Western cities identified variability in policy formulation, overlap and gaps in policy areas in different cities, as well as a mismatch between policy areas and area of need in urban Aboriginal populations. He found that the majority of programs were put in place in the absence of policy and that there was no comprehensive information available on existing programs. Hanselmann (2002a: 11) observes: "This has resulted in urban Aboriginal programming that is largely disjointed and at times incoherent."

The Royal Commission recommended that federal and provincial roles be clarified, with the federal government assuming the cost of establishing self-government, and programs and services for Aboriginal peoples (including Métis) on Aboriginal territories; and that provincial and territorial governments be responsible for financing social services for Aboriginal people living off Aboriginal territories, including programs and services of general access and culturally appropriate programming.[16] While recent federal statements have emphasized the need for coordination and collaboration between different levels of government (DIAND, 1997: 12; Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 12; Sgro, 2002: 23), there is no sign that basic issues of jurisdiction and responsibility are being addressed. In the context of high rates of movement between reserve/rural and urban areas, jurisdiction based on residency on and off Aboriginal territories would not seem to offer much in the way of policy and program integration and co-ordination.

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[16] The federal government would continue to be responsible for social programs such as financial assistance for post-secondary education and uninsured health benefits for Indians living off-reserve.

**Ghettoization**

The possibility of the emergence of urban ghettos has received considerable emphasis in recent work on urban Aboriginal peoples. The Sgro report (2002: 21) raises concerns about the development of inner city ghettos characterized by social problems associated with lack of housing. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 8) asserts that "neighbourhoods have independent and ongoing effects on … social and economic outcomes" and that "individual poverty will deepen and be prolonged as a result of residing in a poor area." Two recent pieces of Canadian research address the implications of Aboriginal segregation. Drost's (1995) chapter is a multivariate analysis of determinants of unemployment. He found that most of the difference in unemployment rates between urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is related to their city of residence, with particularly dismal labour market outcomes in Western cities. Drost (1995: 47) notes that the relatively high unemployment rates of Aboriginal people in Western cities may be related to urban industrial and employment structures. However, he also suggests that these high rates may be related to residential segregation in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. "[T]he relatively higher residential concentration of Aboriginals in the core areas of western CMA's may lead to ghetto effects that exacerbate the already low degree of integration of Aboriginals" (1995: 48). Richards' (2001b) study of Western cities, Toronto and Montreal, notes that Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to live in poor neighbourhoods (defined as census tracts with poverty rates twice the average 1999 family poverty rate). Aboriginal people living in poor neighbourhoods are less likely to be engaged in labour market activities than Aboriginal people in non-poor neighbourhoods and they are more likely to have low education levels. Drawing on Wilson's (1987) and Jargowsky's (1996) analyses of black inner city ghettos, Richards interprets these patterns as evidence of the effects of poor neighbourhoods on life chances.[17]

In the context of an almost complete lack of attention to urban Aboriginal settlement patterns, this work is a welcome contribution. However some of its conclusions need to be examined carefully. Correlations do not determine causality, and in both cases it is important to ask whether Aboriginal people live in poor neighbourhoods because of their own poverty rates – in other words, whether residential segregation is a result rather than the cause of poverty. Moreover, in the United States, the emergence of economies linked to welfare dependency and illicit activities are related to extremely high levels of segregation, many contiguous census tracts of concentrated poverty with little access to employment and little in the way of positive role models, as well as a structure of urban taxation and service delivery that means resources for inner city education and community development are extremely scarce. In American cities, neighbourhoods do have an influence on life chances. However, as the analysis of urban settlement patterns in the previous section shows, a situation similar to American inner cities quite simply does not exist in Canada, and it is hazardous to draw conclusions based on that example (Fong, 1996; Ley and Smith, 2000). The variability of settlement patterns between

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[17]  Neither of these authors offers any recommendations for decreasing segregation. Drost's report does not make policy recommendations. While Richards makes some suggestions aimed at increasing education levels and decreasing reliance on welfare (specifically implementing an Aboriginal school system in major cities, and making access to untied welfare benefits harder for the employable unemployed), he does not propose any initiatives to decrease residential segregation.

cities also suggests that neighbourhood-based programs (e.g., Richards, 2001b; Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002) will not work equally well for all cities.

## Mobility

Like other themes identified in this analysis, concerns about high rates of mobility in the Aboriginal population have a long history (see the summary in Frideres (1974)). There is an assumption in this earlier work that mobility would decrease as Aboriginal migrants adjusted to city life (Frideres, 1988). In this context, continuing high mobility rates among Aboriginal peoples demand an explanation. The broader issues that emerge from the data on mobility patterns relate to:

1. The high level of mobility in the urban Aboriginal population generally, and the significant portion of mobility levels represented by residential mobility;

2. The continued importance of reserves and rural areas as destinations for Aboriginal migrants; and

3. The differences in migration patterns between cities and provinces.

The analysis of the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 7) argues that "the churn factor has serious consequences for how governments and others deliver services and programs to this highly mobile group of people that tends to have very high needs, not to mention the implications of residential instability on the lives of young children and general difficulties in adjusting to urban life." High rates of mobility (churn) may also work against community capacity building, economic development and the emergence of strong urban Aboriginal community organizations.

However, it is difficult to determine fully the implications of high mobility rates without more information about mobile populations and the reasons for high rates of movement. The analysis of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (Canada, Privy Council Office, 2002: 6) suggests that the urban Aboriginal population can be divided into two groups: a "transient" group with limited education, skills or stable social contacts, facing the most marginal living conditions; and a "settler" group that views the city as their home community and is socio-economically less marginalized. Some contemporary analysis of Aboriginal migration suggests the picture is more complicated. First, the highest proportion of flows for all Aboriginal groups is a city-to-city flow and employment is an important reason for this migration (Clatworthy, 1996). While this flow contributes to high mobility rates, it may represent socio-economic mobility. Second, Clatworthy's (1996) comparisons of in-migrants to large urban centres and non-migrants living there found that in-migrants possessed (on average) higher levels of formal education and were more likely than non-migrants to be actively participating in the labour market. In-migrants were, however, less likely to be employed and more likely to have low incomes. The socio-economic differences between migrants (transients) and non-migrants (settlers) are not easy to interpret. At the same time, residential mobility (change in residence in the same community) represents almost half of the moves Aboriginal people make, and this mobility is strongly related to housing conditions. Policies and programs that focus on reducing residential mobility rates represent an important initiative.

The continuing importance of reserves and rural communities of origin also emerges from the data on mobility patterns.  It is not a straightforward matter to interpret these patterns.  Analyses of reasons for migration indicate that family and community circumstances and housing are motives to moving both to and from the city, suggesting that there are elements that attract and repel people to and from both locations.  Improving housing and community conditions might help to reduce the amount of movement between cities and reserves and rural places of origin.  However, some movement back and forth might continue.  Studies on migration internationally found that many migrants maintain connections with their areas of origin through political and economic ties, and movement back and forth.  These ties are important in defining their cultural identities (Portes, 1999).  For Aboriginal people, ties to the land remain an important aspect of their identities (Todd, 2000/2001).  Mobility and return migration may represent, then, not an inability to adjust, but an attempt to adapt to economic realities and to maintain vital and purposeful community relationships.  With respect to policy and program development, these continued ties and frequent movement suggest that initiatives focused only on urban areas will not address some of the significant factors at work in urban Aboriginal communities.

A third significant aspect of mobility patterns is the variable net migration rates for different cities (Norris, Cooke and Clatworthy, 2002a).  These rates suggest that patterns of movement may be affected by the social and economic characteristics of different cities, by provincial policies concerning social welfare and housing and by regional economies.  One implication is that policy and program initiatives can have an effect on migration rates in particular areas.

**Supporting Culture**

In the context of research and policy development that attempts to respond to the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people in urban areas, the emphasis on cultural survival in the report of the Royal Commission (RCAP, 1996a) is an original contribution.  The Commission found that maintaining Aboriginal cultures and identities was important to urban Aboriginal Peoples, but that they faced particular challenges associated with lack of access to people (especially elders), places (especially the land) and practices (especially ceremonies) important to cultural survival.  They also faced challenges because of the perceived hostility toward Aboriginal cultures in many urban areas.

While it is important to recognize that cities present particular challenges to the maintenance of Aboriginal cultures, it is important to avoid an analysis that associates reserves and rural communities with cultural survival and urban communities as places of economic opportunity.[18] Newhouse (2000) argues that the urbanization of the Aboriginal population is occurring along with the reinforcement of cultural identities.  In other words, these phenomena are not mutually exclusive.  He notes that in cities (and in rural areas) Aboriginal people are reformulating Western institutions and practices to support Aboriginal cultures and identities, so that Aboriginal people can survive as distinct people in contemporary societies.  The implication is that economic marginalization should not be the sole focus of initiatives for urban Aboriginal people.  Reinforcing and supporting cultural identities, practices and institutions are also important.

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[18]  Alan Cairns (2000) suggests that this is a bias in the report of the Royal Commission.  He argues that the Commission's strong focus on the importance of culture resulted in an emphasis on land-based nations and a relative neglect of urban populations.

None of the recent federal government policy papers focuses on cultural maintenance, although there is some mention of the need to coordinate initiatives with urban Aboriginal institutions. Clearly, one way of supporting cultural identities may be to increase the socio-economic status of urban Aboriginal peoples so that they have more choices about and capacity for establishing culturally appropriate institutions. This approach assumes that approaches to changing Aboriginal marginalization can occur without attention to creating strong cultural identities – an assumption that is not well borne out in the available literature. Instead, it seems likely that support for Aboriginal cultures and initiatives that focus on the reduction of poverty need to occur at the same time. The Royal Commission recommended that all levels of government initiate programs to increase opportunities to promote Aboriginal cultures in urban areas (RCAP, 1996a: 537). Some of the particular areas that the Commission identified included support for urban Aboriginal institutions, initiatives concerning languages, and access to land and elders.

**Status-Blind Service Delivery**

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996a: 558-61) wrestled with the issue of whether services in urban areas should be "status-blind," that is directed toward all Aboriginal groups regardless of legal status or cultural heritage, or whether services should be directed toward particular groups. The Commission recognized that many Aboriginal people were opposed to status-blind service delivery and that more directed services could play an important role in supporting cultural identities. However, the Commission also recognized that status-blind service delivery could be more cost-effective: "We are persuaded by the success of friendship centers that status-blind service delivery is generally advantageous in urban areas, because it fosters development of an urban Aboriginal community and promotes efficient use of scarce resources" (1996: 560). Key informants in Hanselmann's (2002a) recent interviews with more than 100 individuals involved in urban Aboriginal policy making and programming emphasized that, while it was important to recognize that urban Aboriginal people are not homogeneous, programs that worked were those that were status-blind – that is, they did not discriminate between different Aboriginal people.

In a break with past federal programming, the Sgro Task Force Interim Report picks up these themes in two of its recommendations.

- Recommendation 20: Examine current policies and develop ways to target the special needs of the Urban Aboriginal population, *including Métis and non-Status Indians*.

- Recommendation 21: Strengthen educational supports, in cooperation with *First Nations, Métis and non-Status Indians* at post-secondary levels to better meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples in urban centres (Sgro, 2002: 22; emphasis added).

These recommendations are significant because they seek to break the mould of status-based funding, recognizing that urban Aboriginal initiatives need a broader reach.

## VI.  Summing Up:  Where We Are Now and a Framework for the Future

It is appropriate at this point to re-cap briefly the central characteristics of the national policy environment related to urban Aboriginal people and urban Aboriginal Peoples.  This will inform our concluding suggestions for future directions.

In our view, the current policy milieu has four key characteristics.  First is the jurisdictional maze that both contributes to and is an outcome of how we have defined the urban Aboriginal *problematique*.  This maze is constructed through both our federal system and the confounding and conflicting distinctions that past policy and jurisprudence have applied to Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal people.

Second, we are developing a more nuanced understanding of the characteristics of Aboriginal people living in cities.  This relates to their basic demographic characteristics and to the population dynamics of the Aboriginal population as they relate to cities.  From a policy perspective, it is crucial that we recognize that the urban Aboriginal population in Canada is not distinct from the "non-urban." They are interconnected in terms of mobility, culture and politics. As we look at individual cities, it is important that we inform policy choices by acknowledging that, in many cases, the population is not ghettoized; nor is it uniformly disadvantaged.  There is capacity in the population as a result of increasing levels of education and the emergence of a middle class.  This means that we need to think about the urban Aboriginal policy agenda as focusing on more than poverty and social dislocation, although those remain important.  Issues of culture and recognition are also important, not just because of the emergence of a middle class but because, as the Royal Commission noted, these are fundamental to Aboriginal identities.

The third element of our nascent policy understanding is the (re)emergence of a more holistic understanding of what makes cities vital and how urban policy processes need to work.  We refer here to the emergence of the governance paradigm and an increasing understanding that, even from the perspective of national policy, locally driven initiatives can be very responsive to immediate problems.  Further, we have learned from the National Homelessness Initiative that a good collaborative relationship between the federal government and the local community can also build additional policy understanding and capacity at both levels.

Finally, two manifestations of federal policy thinking related to urban Aboriginal issues – the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) and the Sgro Task Force – may be benchmarks for determining future needs.  The emphasis in the UAS on coordination within the federal government, both in Ottawa and in the provinces, and the recommendations of the Sgro Task Force that include First Nations, Métis and non-Status Indians, represent important new directions.

In light of where we are, where might we go?  We conclude by suggesting some approaches for federal policy development related to Canada's urban Aboriginal fact.  We have chosen to organize our suggestions around the three dimensions of the new urban focus described earlier: the governance of cities, social cohesion and diversity in the urban milieu and urban competitiveness.  It should become quickly evident that, although we have used this as an

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organizing framework, some of the fundamentals of our suggestions relate to the historic high politics of federalism and the Crown's relationship to Aboriginal Peoples.

**Urban Aboriginal Policy and the Governance of Cities**

As we have described the urban governance paradigm, the key question facing the federal government is: whom to engage on urban Aboriginal issues? We suggest that urban Aboriginal issues are everyone's issues, especially in Western cities. In our view, however, the federal government should consider a leadership role by dealing with some of the fundamental issues around Aboriginal distinctions and recognition that have bedeviled moving ahead on a coherent urban agenda.

One central challenge is to confront the arbitrary distinction between Status and non-Status Indians. This need is particularly acute as we move into the period when many young people who received Status under C-31 become parents of non-Status children. This is a result of the provision of C-31 that bestows Status only on one generation beyond individuals re-gaining status under provisions of the legislation. Clatworthy and Smith's (1992) projections of the future population distribution of "Status" and "non-Status" people who have Aboriginal identity are cautionary. A decline in the Status population as we move to the next generation does not mean that Aboriginal issues will go away. In fact, they may well become more intractable.

A second central challenge is to address the access of Métis and non-Status Indians to federal programs that have traditionally benefited Indians and Inuit. In the absence of clarity on Métis and non-Status rights, the federal government should consider extending eligibility for post-secondary support as a matter of good public policy, as recommended by the Sgro Task Force. Consideration should also be given to increasing the level of support for social housing for the Aboriginal population and to re-calibrating support for the off-reserve population (including Métis and non-Status Indians). The urban population appears to have particular housing needs that should inform policy and program development. We discuss these needs when we deal with economic competitiveness.

It might be argued that these two steps would, in effect, let the provinces off the hook. But we suggest that removing the artificial distinctions established under the federal *Indian Act* and taking this bold policy initiative, in terms of post-secondary education, would remove some of the barriers to real federal-provincial collaboration. Particularly in Western Canada, provincial governments have gone some distance to recognizing that their cities are key to building prosperity and that unresolved issues related to the urban Aboriginal population represents a potential barrier to sustainability.

The broad scope of governance related to urban Aboriginal matters also extends to federal relations with First Nations (band) governments. One of our major themes has been that it is inappropriate to consider the urban Aboriginal population as totally distinct from the reserve-based and rural population. We have reviewed the "churn" of the population and also discussed the evolving and sometimes tense relations between reserve and off-reserve band populations post C-31 and Corbière. We have also noted that some First Nations governments are making real efforts to service their off-reserve people. The federal government needs to engage actively

with and provide appropriate support to all First Nations governments as they deal more directly with their off-reserve people.  First Nations governments will be increasingly required to respond to the priorities of their off-reserve members, as a result of new accountability relationships post-Corbière and under the proposed *First Nations Governance Act*.  This will require concentrated effort by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which has traditionally focused on the on-reserve population.  At the same time, the federal government should review the nature of support it provides to emerging urban organizations that are taking a leadership role in representing urban Aboriginal populations and organizing new initiatives.  We recognize that it is difficult to pinpoint or categorize these organizations on a national basis.  In some cases they may be "Aboriginal councils," in other cases friendship centers or coalitions of service agencies.  The construction of Aboriginal interests in Canada's cities is a work in progress – not unlike the changing face of interest representation for other groups in our cities.

If the high politics of past Aboriginal policy weigh heavily on future policy needs, so too does the history of federal-provincial relations with regard to cities.  Past reviews of tri-level intergovernmental relations have noted the hostility with which provincial governments have viewed direct relations between the federal government and municipalities (Feldman and Graham, 1979).  Times have changed, however, not least because of declining capacity within provincial governments (Graham and Phillips, 1998).  There is scope for direct federal-local engagement that is consistent with the urban governance paradigm.  There is, in fact, a recent and instructive example of the federal government dealing directly with cities and community-based voluntary agencies that provides a possible model for federal action on urban Aboriginal matters.  This is the community-focused model that is at the heart of the Supporting Community Partnership's Initiative (SCPI), part of the broader National Homelessness Initiative.  In general terms, SCPI provides an example of the federal government developing broad policy and program parameters, setting aside funding and then working with individual communities to come up with an action plan that meets the needs of that community.  The planning process has generally involved participation by the municipality and a broad range of community groups.  The specifics of the local plan and the specific arrangements for disbursement of any federal money and accountability have been negotiated on a case-by-case basis, with a relatively small menu of organizational approaches proving popular.  These have involved, variously, the municipal government, some other community entity or Human Resources Development Canada taking the lead.  Our review of past research on urban Aboriginal conditions and action referred to the apparent lack of policy coherence, policy and program coordination and organizational coordination.  It might be suggested that SCPI, with its localized approach, can potentially lead to the same problems.  We argue that, in the context of the new urban reality and the variations in the situation of Canadian cities and their Aboriginal populations, this is the only way to proceed.  Conditions and needs vary across the country.  The federal government will achieve the highest level of responsiveness and create the greatest opportunity for policy and program learning, at the local level and more broadly, if this approach is used.

**Social Cohesion and Diversity**

To develop the most promising future for Aboriginal people in cities and for cities themselves, it will be important to recognize that the urban Aboriginal population is itself very diverse.  The urban Aboriginal population is diverse as a result of individuals having various identities – some

ethno-cultural, some administratively imposed. There is also a diversity of experience, need and prospects shaped by age, gender, education and level of human security. One consequence is that it will be important to place particular emphasis on policies and programs that benefit specific segments of the urban Aboriginal population to meet specific needs and respect cultural differences. Our review of the demographic profile of Aboriginal people in cities and recent research on urban Aboriginal issues suggest, for example, that special efforts should be placed on developing policies and initiatives that respond to the circumstances of Aboriginal women, youth and children in cities.

One ongoing issue, for Aboriginal people and for policy debate, concerns the extent to which programs and services for the urban Aboriginal population should be provided on a "status-blind" basis. This issue was hotly debated in presentations to the Royal Commission. As noted above, the Sgro Task Force has raised the idea of one of its members, Senator Chalifoux, that any Aboriginal housing initiatives supported under the proposed national housing strategy *must* be status-blind. This is indeed a tempting course, given the scarcity of public funds and the observable need for housing by Aboriginal people living in cities, as well as for other services and supports. On the surface, a "status-blind" approach would also seem consistent with our earlier suggestion that strict classifications of eligibility need to be removed, as a matter of good public policy, if not Aboriginal right. We suggest, however, that policies and principles for federal involvement in urban Aboriginal service initiatives emphasize equitable access, rather than status-blind approaches. The latter should not be precluded, but it is equally important to acknowledge historical and contemporary differences among Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.

The quest for both social cohesion and celebration of diversity implies another role for the federal government. This is the federal role related to fostering inter-cultural understanding and eradicating racism. We will not deal with this extensively, except to state that racism against Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Peoples is present in Canada. In cities, this has sometimes resulted in the death of Aboriginal individuals. We hope that the responsibility of the federal government in eradicating racism is self-evident. This is not a responsibility that the federal government should shoulder on its own, but a leadership role is crucial.

Finally, the federal government (along with others) has a role in supporting Aboriginal cultural initiatives and initiatives that contribute to inter-cultural understanding among Aboriginal cultures and others. This would help to meet the needs of diverse Aboriginal peoples in the context of an "equitable access approach." It would also contribute positively to cultural diversity in urban areas. We suggest that, if one of the reasons for high rates of mobility has to do with maintaining access to cultural communities, then enhancing these opportunities in the urban context might help Aboriginal people become more stable in urban areas.

**Economic Competitiveness**

Our demographic review pointed out that the Aboriginal population in Canadian cities has higher rates of unemployment and lower wage employment than the general population and, indeed than other visible minorities. Further, the very large child and youth population, particularly in Western cities, portends a worsening situation or, alternatively, an opportunity to rejuvenate the urban labour force. The availability of an educated and reliable labour force is generally

considered a key factor in determining where firms and other organizations locate. This further buttresses the argument that the federal government place priority on support for education among the Aboriginal population. Here again, the distinction between directing efforts toward the urban population, as opposed to "the rest," fades. There may be more opportunities to receive formal education in the urban setting and the specifics of some programs may need to be changed to reflect urban circumstances, but the phenomenon of "churn" suggests a broadly targeted approach.

Two other policy areas interact very directly with work on education and labour force participation: child care and housing.

We suggested earlier that there is merit in responding to the circumstances of Aboriginal women and children in cities. In light of the large number of mother-led families in the urban population, specific programming to meet their needs for child care may have a beneficial impact on participation in education and labour market activities by women who lead single families.

There also appear to be unique characteristics of housing needs among the urban population. Current research in Winnipeg and Edmonton suggests that urban Aboriginal households are burdened by many people who "visit" because they cannot find housing. This keeps down the homeless population on the street, but it also makes households (many mother-led) much more vulnerable, due to the unpredictability of arrivals and departures, and overcrowding. Housing conditions are a major factor in hyper-mobility, both within cities and back and forth between cities and reserves. While part of mobility may be seen as a positive way to maintain connections with communities and the land, hyper-mobility related to poor housing conditions is not positive. Addressing the need for appropriate, affordable and adequate housing for families and individuals needs to be a major priority, and may be a first step in creating stable communities that can benefit from initiatives for cultural, community, and economic development.

Aside from preparing individuals for labour force participation and ameliorating pressing issues related to housing, there are also community-based approaches to economic opportunity that need to be explored. We have noted the dispersed settlement of the Aboriginal population in many Canadian cities. Geographic ghettoization appears weaker than conventional wisdom suggests. But community economic development (CED) initiatives need not be strictly bounded by neighbourhood, as the experience of the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program, a pilot program to test models of CED in Canada suggests (Cameron, 2002). To the extent that CED initiatives provide participants with income and self-worth, they contribute to individual achievement and broader civic well being. The federal government could explore past and new approaches to Aboriginal economic development, with a focus on community as well as on entrepreneurs.

Aside from emphasizing the availability of a good labour force and the benefits of having a healthy economy to attract new economic activity, current thinking about the economic competitiveness of cities emphasizes the importance of quality of life as a draw. This links the economic and social/cultural dimensions of urban life. Support for affirmation of Aboriginal identities in Canada's cities can be one element of this. The challenge then, as it relates to

economic competitiveness, is not just to improve the labour force readiness of the Aboriginal population. It also relates to fundamental issues of culture and rights.


## VII. Conclusion: Exercising Federal Leadership

It will be evident that we think there is a central leadership role for the federal government related to the urban Aboriginal agenda. In the introduction, we focused on the need to understand the conditions under which the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and people and the nation's cities is as constructive as possible. It should now be clear that the federal government has a central role in fostering constructive conditions and a constructive relationship by virtue of its fundamental relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples. The "high politics and policy" of this relationship, related to Aboriginal rights and culture, is as central to dealing with Aboriginal issues related to cities as is the federal government's policy and fiscal capacity in dealing with issues of urban poverty. The Government of Canada can also play a constructive role through its support of Aboriginal organizations working in cities as they attempt to learn from each other and build their capacity.

We acknowledge past and current efforts by the Government of Canada to recognize "the urban Aboriginal problem" and undertake actions to deal with difficult and complex situations in specific cities and more generally. We suggest that the federal government is increasingly aware of a key ingredient for thoughtful and concerted policy thinking and action. That ingredient is leadership in a policy arena requiring significant efforts to develop horizontal policy and program linkages within the federal government and constructive vertical linkages with provinces and municipalities.

The specific characteristics of the intergovernmental relationship on urban Aboriginal matters will vary, depending on the province or territory involved. We hypothesize that Quebec will be particularly insistent that it act as a gatekeeper to engagement with municipalities. This would be consistent with past practice. Ontario, as a result of significant downloading of responsibility for social services to municipal governments and its current disengagement on Aboriginal issues, may be open to direct federal-municipal links. This has proven to be the case with the homelessness initiative in Ontario. The Prairie provinces may be open to a variety of models of engagement, propelled by the significance of the urban Aboriginal challenge.

We note that the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and the Sgro Task Force call for "horizontal management" on urban Aboriginal issues, without vesting specific responsibility for policy leadership and specific actions. As has been noted, the Minister and Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development concern themselves with Status Indians, especially those living on reserves, Inuit and related matters. The Minister who serves as Federal Interlocutor for Métis and non-Status Indians is concerned with their specific issues. Other initiatives, such as the National Homelessness Initiative, are distributed to line departments. It is beyond the scope of our work to come up with specific recommendations for better machinery of government to deal with urban Aboriginal issues.

However, there are some structural options to achieve the necessary level of coordination and leadership within the federal government. One option, recommended by the Royal Commission (see Volume 2: 361-71), would be the appointment of a new Minister of Aboriginal Relations, with responsibility for overall policy leadership on Aboriginal matters. This senior minister would chair a Cabinet committee on Aboriginal affairs, consisting of ministers with responsibility for particular aspects of the Aboriginal dossier. Responsibility for the urban dimension would fit well with this model, especially since we now understand that the urban, reserve and non-urban aspects of Aboriginal life are so entangled.

A second option would be to expand the mandate of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development specifically to include urban matters. This has some superficial attraction. We suggest, however, that there are at least two factors that make this approach less attractive. First, this Minister is heavily burdened with both policy and operational responsibilities related to Status Indians and the territorial North. Second, the broad spectrum of initiatives required to deal with the urban Aboriginal fact suggests the need for a structure that is led by a senior minister, with the mandate to supervise policy and program development across a range of federal departments and agencies and manage intergovernmental relationships. Although the focus of action is very different, the national security challenges identified after September 11, 2001, and the model and mandate of the Minister Responsible for National Security may be instructive. Certainly, the challenges of policy leadership related to Aboriginal communities and urban sustainability require comparable effort.

**Table 1**
**Aboriginal People[1] In Major Metropolitan Centres, 1996**

| | Aboriginal Population | % of Total Population | % of Aboriginal Population Not Registered[2] | % of Total Population < 14 | % of Total Lone Parent Population | % of Total Population With < Gr. 12[3] | % of Total Unemployed Population | % of Total Poor Population[4] | % of Population 15+ Earning $40,000+ in 1995 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Halifax | 2110 | 0.6 | 59.2 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.9 | n/a | 7.4 |
| Montreal | 9965 | 0.3 | 58.0 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 10.9 |
| Ottawa-Hull | 11605 | 1.2 | 61.7 | 1.4 | 2.3 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.9[5] | 15.3 |
| Toronto | 16095 | 0.4 | 54.1 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 14.2 |
| Thunder Bay | 7325 | 5.9 | 24.6 | 9.8 | 13.6 | 6.7 | 10.6 | 17.0 | 8.5 |
| Winnipeg | 45750 | 6.9 | 54.8 | 12.0 | 16.2 | 8.7 | 15.3 | 17.6 | 4.6 |
| Regina | 13605 | 7.1 | 34.6 | 13.0 | 18.0 | 7.9 | 16.0 | 24.3 | 5.6 |
| Saskatoon | 16165 | 7.5 | 43.0 | 13.3 | 19.1 | 8.4 | 14.4 | 22.5 | 6.0 |
| Calgary | 15195 | 1.9 | 55.3 | 2.8 | 3.7 | 2.4 | 3.3 | 4.4 | 8.8 |
| Edmonton | 32820 | 3.8 | 55.0 | 6.2 | 8.9 | 5.0 | 7.5 | 9.4 | 6.6 |
| Vancouver | 31140 | 1.7 | 48.4 | 2.6 | 4.2 | 2.2 | 3.4 | 4.3 | 9.7 |

Source:   Statistics Canada, 1996 Census, cat. no. 95-206-XPB, Ottawa, Minister of Industry, 1998. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census. Portrait of Aboriginal Population in Canada: Dimensions Series. 94F0009XDB96002. Lee (2000: 11, 41). Data are also available for the proportion of Aboriginal people making more than $40,000 in Victoria. In that city, 9.1 percent of the Aboriginal population 15+ earn more than $40,000 per year.

[1]   Based on populations who identify as Aboriginal people.
[2]   This is the population that is not registered under the Indian Act.
[3]   Proportion of the population 15 or older who are not currently attending school.
[4]   Based on the population below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs.
[5]   Poverty statistics are for Ottawa alone.

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