

Inner City Service Improvement for the Aboriginal Community in Edmonton

*A project initiative of the Edmonton Inner City Violent
Crime Taskforce and the Edmonton Aboriginal
Representative Committee*

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Executive Summary

This report is the result of a six month project undertaken to clarify the needs of the aboriginal community in the inner city, areas for improved service delivery and a model for service delivery appropriate for the aboriginal people and the service agencies.

The report has two components: 1) background and issue analysis, and 2) recommendations for action. The recommendations report incorporates two sections; future work areas and strategies (the proposed work plan), and a proposed mechanism for co-ordinating activity for inner city service improvement (a "model" for introducing change and improvement in service delivery).

The background and issue analysis report provides a discussion on the background of the project, the approach adopted, objectives, a summary of the issues and needs in the aboriginal community, a description of existing community-based programs, and a community service model for the inner city.

Given the limited information base that is available on Edmonton's inner city and aboriginal needs, the background and issue analysis report (section E) highlights issues needing attention. Community input was obtained through two sources; 1) the results of a workshop held in the inner city for the aboriginal community and 2) documenting "stories" of residents of the inner city who were willing to share their life experiences, their expectations for assistance and their satisfaction with the help they received. This research was provided to a series of service agency workshops to assist them in developing a list of priority action areas and a mechanism to co-ordinate future activity.

The review process resulted in consensus, and agreement upon a short term action plan, and a mechanism to put these actions into place. There was also an agreement that through co-ordinated effort the agencies will improve service provision. These improvements will enable them to assess the need for referral protocols, new systems/procedures and improved co-ordination of service. In addition, this work will enable the agencies to determine whether more formal co-ordination is needed, e.g. "one-stop shopping".

The project recommendations have been approved by the sponsoring Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Task Force for implementation.

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A. Introduction and Purpose

The aboriginal community in Edmonton faces a number of challenges and constraints in adjusting to urban living conditions. It is often difficult to make the transition from the reserve setting, from a way of life, family ties and support. In addition, the basic essentials of employment, housing and education are often out of reach. The result is that a great deal of anxiety, frustration and uncertainty often accompanies efforts to live in the urban community.

Similar experiences for aboriginal people in urban centres across Canada, reaffirm the need for urban support systems and services that relate to native culture and native reality. These services are either not available nor readily accessible.

Often, the pressures and demands of urban living become overwhelming for aboriginal peoples. This can and often does result in turning to substance abuse, violence and other forms of escape. As well, there has been recognition given to the disproportionate percentage of native people involved in criminal activity or impacted by criminal activity in the inner city.

There have been many studies on the needs of the aboriginal community and on the inadequacies of the criminal justice and policing systems. There have also been a number of demands that urban support systems and services available to the aboriginal community be reviewed for improvement. Despite this recognition, there has been limited initiative focused on how to improve and coordinate *inner city* services for aboriginal people.

The purpose of this project is to determine needs of the aboriginal community in Edmonton's inner city, to review the community support systems and to recommend a "community service model" and an action plan to address the gaps and inadequacies over time. This project has resulted in this working paper for submission to the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta and community agencies. In its early drafts, it provided a discussion paper for community input and consensus building; to clarify the aboriginal community perspective on needs and appropriate "service models."

B. Background

In early 1991, the Edmonton Inner City Crime Task Force completed an assessment of the high priority issues related to crime that needed attention by community agencies, City Hall and other levels of government. The report identified the following issue areas: crime prevention, prostitution, family violence, inadequate housing, unemployment and poverty. In addition, a major emphasis focuses on the native community and the difficulties in urban adjustment and transition that needed immediate attention.

The Task Force initiated discussions with the federal and provincial governments regarding native issues. As a result of the initiative, the Solicitor General Canada agreed to provide "catalyst funding" to initiate a review of needs, services and a "service model" appropriate to the inner city. This report is a result of this project.

C. Approach

In approaching this issue, the Task Force sought the services of a consulting team and established a steering committee to guide the project team. It was agreed that a three month review process would be adequate to highlight the issues, to outline the existing delivery system and to describe alternative "service models" for application to the inner city and the aboriginal community. Consultation was undertaken with the Edmonton Aboriginal Representative Committee to ensure that there was broad-based political support to the initiative.

A work program was developed for the three month period. The work program included a review of existing research and studies, consultation with knowledgeable individuals, community agency workshops and a focus on community consultation.

D. Project Objectives

The project was designed to achieve a number of objectives:

- 1) to provide a summary of the priority issues facing the aboriginal community in the inner city.
- 2) to describe the existing service system, the strengths of the system in relation to the issues identified and gaps/inadequacies in service coordination.
- 3) to outline a community model that reflects the needs of major segments of the aboriginal community and appropriate means of providing assistance (support, recognizing individual rights to choose and to develop along a path that is comfortable).
- 4) to develop a policy management framework for Provincial/Federal governments to ensure that senior levels of government would be made aware of their responsibility in responding to needs.
- 5) to outline an approach to inter-agency collaboration to enable community agencies to help in relation to their strengths and capacities and in relation to an expanding Provincial/Federal commitment.
- 6) to describe an ongoing planning and consultation process to ensure that project findings would be acted on through an action planning/implementation and demonstration project phase.
- 7) to outline a proposed organizational mechanism that would provide a forum for governments, agencies and the community to work together on the planning/consultation process.

4) Housing

A) Recommendations

These recommendations have been taken from the reports and interviews cited in the background on housing, below:

- ◆ **Build or renovate 200 units of affordable social housing in the inner city per year, for the next three years.**
- ◆ **Enforce safety regulations in inner city rooming houses.**
- ◆ **Designate land in inner city for social housing development.**
- ◆ **Ensure low income residential use of the Jasper East area is retained.**

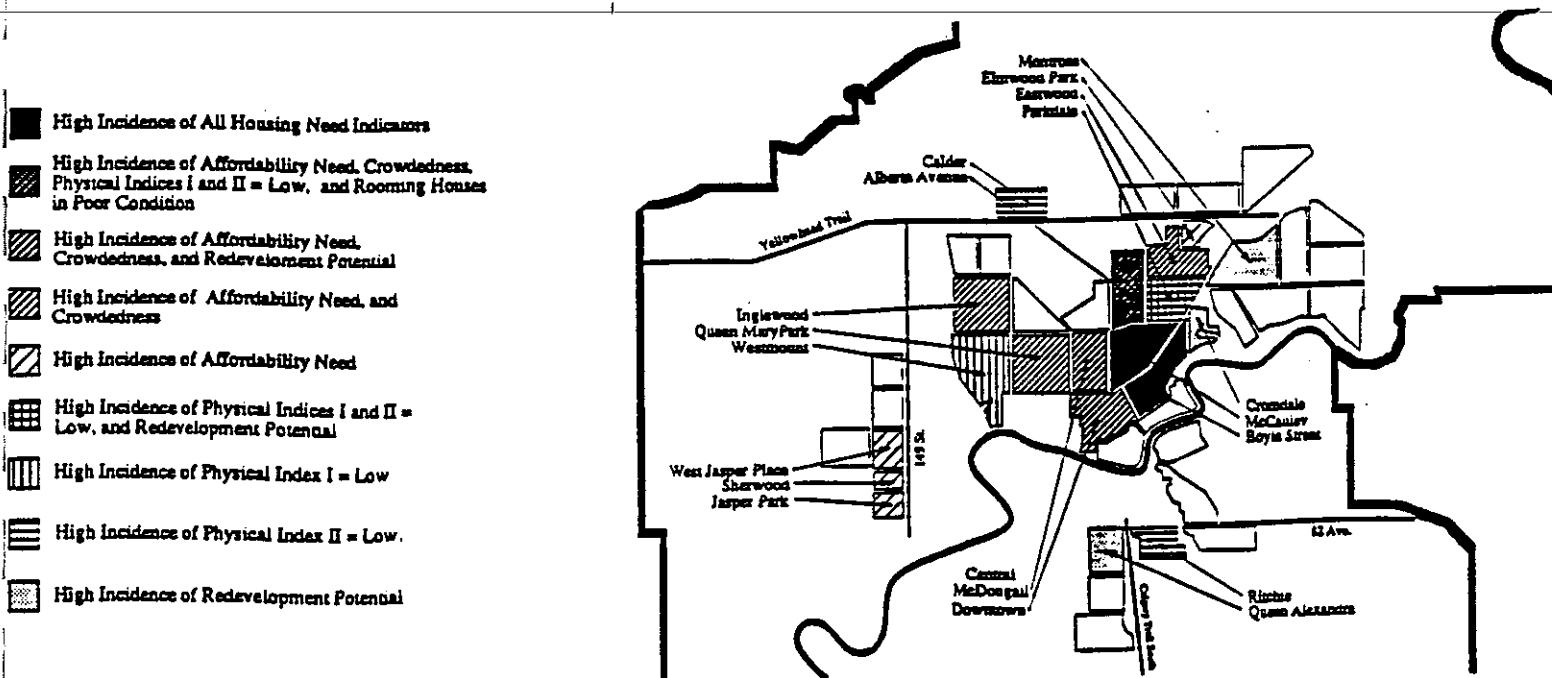
B) Background

Poor housing has long been identified as major issue in the inner city. Inadequate housing can be identified in several ways, including lack of affordable housing, crowded housing, and physically inadequate housing. The inner city faces all three of these problems to a degree greater than any other part of the City.³³

INCIDENCE OF HOUSING PROBLEMS IN OLDER AREAS OF EDMONTON

(Inner City Housing Need and Demand Study - 1990)

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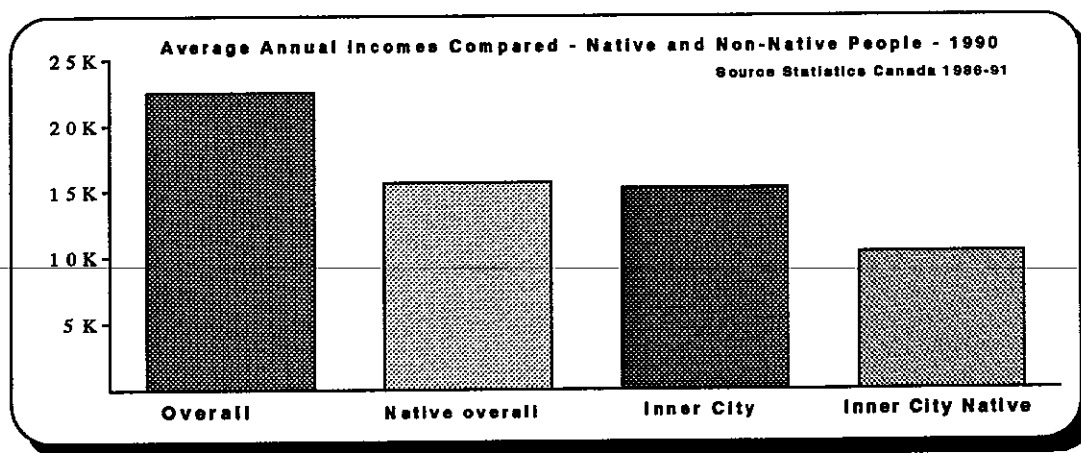
E) 1. Introduction:

In the 1986 census, 27,900 Edmontonians identified themselves as wholly or partly of aboriginal origin. This figure was far larger than in 1981 (12,020), but the definition of an aboriginal person was broader in 1986.

There is a concentration of aboriginal people on the north side (including, but not limited to the inner city), and in some areas of west Edmonton. In these areas, between 6 and 18% of the population is of aboriginal origin. It has been suggested this may underestimate the number of aboriginal people living in the inner city core, either because aboriginal people in that area were not fully counted, or because they chose not to indicate their ethnic origins.

Far more aboriginal Edmontonians face poverty than the general population. 43% of people in families headed by an aboriginal person are poor, compared with 17% in the general population.

Average income levels for aboriginal people are not currently available on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis. However, income levels can be estimated¹:



Poverty amongst aboriginal people is a result of a number of different factors. These include but are not limited to:

- Lack of employment
- Racism
- Failure of the educational system

For those living in poverty, a number of social conditions may exist which hamper success, and contribute to a *cycle of poverty*. These include:

- Poor housing
- Impact of substance abuse
- Impact of crime
- Family dysfunction

The aim of this brief discussion paper is to provide a summary of the available information, opinions, and recommendations on these issues.

E) 2. Education

A) Recommendations for change

The following recommendations have been compiled from reports and minutes of meetings as indicated in the background section:

- ♦ **Teaching Aboriginal culture to teachers, counsellors, social workers and Aboriginal students in the school system must be a priority.**
- ♦ **Aboriginal people must be better represented as teachers, counsellors, etc. in the school system.**
- ♦ **Curricula dealing with Aboriginal culture should have direct input from Aboriginal people.**
- ♦ **Revamp the present method of funding for schools which is based on attendance in the first two months and therefore does not adequately provide incentive or interest in keeping Aboriginal students in school.**
- ♦ **Revamp the school suspension policy (ie. in-school suspension) and establish a review board for suspensions in which the teacher, principal, parents (or parent advocate) and the student are all involved.**
- ♦ **Determine causal factors for high drop-out rate among Aboriginal students and implement needed support services and systems.**
- ♦ **Establish a local Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee to address education concerns and initiatives in the school system.**
- ♦ **Schools should become more accessible and interactive with the community to encourage parental participation in their children's (and in some cases, the parents') education.**
- ♦ **Establish Aboriginal parent support groups.**
- ♦ **Develop effective support systems for Aboriginal students experiencing low self-esteem or difficulty in school.**
- ♦ **Develop pre-school services to identify "at-risk".**
- ♦ **Aboriginal children (ie. with learning disabilities) and to establish a tracking system for the early years (gr. K-3) to develop needed skills and build self-esteem throughout the early school years.**
- ♦ **Establish positive early education opportunities in the inner city such as the "Head Start" program.**
- ♦ **Meals should be provided free of charge to all inner city students.**
- ♦ **Establish community-based alternative education programs incorporating traditional holistic philosophies and values for Aboriginal people who are unable to fit into regular programs.**

B) Background

Native Education reports do not focus on inner city needs of Aboriginal people in Edmonton; instead they are of a broader provincial or city-wide scope. To gain some insight about educational needs of Aboriginal children in the inner city, a brief on poverty in the local schools is examined as poverty among Aboriginal people is greater than the general population.

Poor school performance and poverty in Edmonton are clearly linked; studies show that children from poor families are less likely to finish high school than children from middle- and upper-income families. ² In Edmonton, approximately 41,000 children, nearly one in four live below the poverty line and are most likely to come from families:

- headed by female single parents
- headed by a parent under 25 years of age
- with three or more children
- of Native people.

Edmonton schools with high poverty profiles, including inner city schools as well as those in outlying areas, scored far below the provincial average on the 1985 Alberta Education standardized tests. ³

Policies and programs aimed at addressing the imbalance that exists across socio-economic lines reiterate many of the initiatives proposed here to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples. Some of the strategies include: early intervention programs, such as "Head Start", expansion of food programs in schools, child self-esteem programs, community-based alternative programs, parental and community involvement initiatives, and networking and advocacy by all sectors of the community on behalf of the children living in poverty. ⁴

Studies also indicate that a commitment of funding for early intervention programs is a positive investment of public funds; for every \$1 spent on pre-school programs, it is estimated that there is a \$5 saving down the line for remedial education services, social assistance and other social services. ⁵

Alberta Government's assessment of the education system (March, 1992) rates the success Native children achieve in school as "fair." ⁶ It received the lowest rating of thirteen priorities established as the provincial government's plan of action for the nineties.

Although some efforts have been made to improve Native involvement in education, the system is still not meeting the education needs of young Native people. There is still a drop-out rate as high as 70% for Native youth in some remote and rural communities. ⁷

The government indicates that more needs to be done to improve academic achievement and success of Native students. In addition, more information is needed about what is important to them, what challenges them to excel and achieve their best. Alberta Education also says they are focusing on getting better information about the satisfaction of parents and other members of the Native community and ways the schools can better meet the needs of Native students and achieve greater Native involvement in education. ⁸

The Edmonton Public School Board indicates the reasons often given as causes for the lack of success of Native students include:

- differences between school culture and Native cultures.
- family circumstances: poverty, transiency and substance abuse.
- overt or covert discrimination.
- resources, practices and strategies that are unresponsive to the learning needs of Native students.
- programming excludes adequate opportunities for Native and other students to learn about contemporary Native issues and positive attitudes about Native peoples. ⁹

The fact that Native students are not experiencing success in school and the number of Native people reporting less than a grade 9 level achievement are indicators that the schooling needs of Native students are not being met. In response, some district level initiatives and different programming strategies are proposed, but not new curriculum. In addition, the School Act supports alternative programming for linguistic and cultural reasons. ¹⁰

The Edmonton Public School Board plan identifies five goals to meet the schooling needs of Native students as follows:

- to improve Native student achievement and self-esteem.
- to improve the continuity of learning for Native students.
- to improve the quality and timeliness of services provided to Native students, parents and community.
- to support the partnership of home and the school in the development of Native students.
- to improve access to services provided by social agencies. ¹¹

The Edmonton Catholic School District's goal for their Native Education Program is "equal education" for Native students, therefore, "special handling is required." ¹² Two major dimensions of their program includes:

1) Initiatives in Education

- Native personnel develop Native cultural presentations, organize cultural activities and provide Native resource personnel for interested schools.

2) Ben Calf Robe Program

- alternative school program seeks to meet the academic and cultural needs of Native junior high students.
- focus on blending the traditional Native way with contemporary life.
- Cree as a second language is taught to all students in the program.
- students are provided with a daily breakfast and lunch.
- adult literacy program is also housed in the school.

Results of the 1984 "Demographic Characteristics of Edmonton" report, indicates most Native children rank with their non-Native counterparts in average age-to grade-level achievements. However, adult levels of education are low relative to the non-Native population. ¹³

The number of Aboriginal students wanting to enrol in college/university level programs is increasing. But often there is a significant gap between their present level of knowledge and skills and the required level to gain entry into a post-secondary education program.

A needs assessment done in May, 1991, for Grant MacEwan Community College explored the possibility of developing a "bridging program" for Aboriginal students in Edmonton. ¹⁴ Results showed a need for additional University and College Entrance Preparation (U.C.E.P.) programs with two levels of entry: pre-U.C.E.P. (gr. 7-9) and U.C.E.P. (gr. 10-12).

The Native Issues Working Group has had discussions about problems associated with Aboriginal children in the school systems. In addition to making recommendations to improve the education system, deficiencies were also identified as follows:

- there are inadequate statistics of Aboriginals in the school system.
- many Aboriginal students have their education interrupted by frequent moves, family upsets, academic problems, suspensions, etc.
- there is a shortage of space for special needs children, many of whom are Aboriginal.
- there is an inadequate tracking system ensuring that children are being sent to school. ¹⁵

Other recommendations and needs identified were previously mentioned in this report. Boyle Street Coop's Youth Unit also made numerous recommendations to improve education in inner schools. ¹⁶ They also support the need to have alternative education programs for the youth and adults in the inner city.

Adele Arcand also identified many gaps in the education system and made recommendations on education initiatives for Aboriginal people. ¹⁷ She emphasizes

that the ways of understanding and learning for Aboriginal people are not the same as those accepted by the dominant learning institutions. And further that understanding and respect of these different ways must be recognized and implemented in order to make any headway in accomplishing the change necessary for the survival of aboriginal people. Effective Native education programs teach the relatedness of the universe and an individual's part in it according to the teachings of the Elders. The emphasis she states is "on teaching children how to learn, not just what to learn. How to feel, not what to feel. And how to strive, not what to strive for." ¹⁸

The problems aboriginal people are experiencing in the education system require immediate action and efforts of all agencies concerned, including the Native community. Inner city issues must not be isolated as Arcand states: "isolating it to the inner city only aggravates the situation"¹⁹

E) 3. Employment

A) Recommendations for change

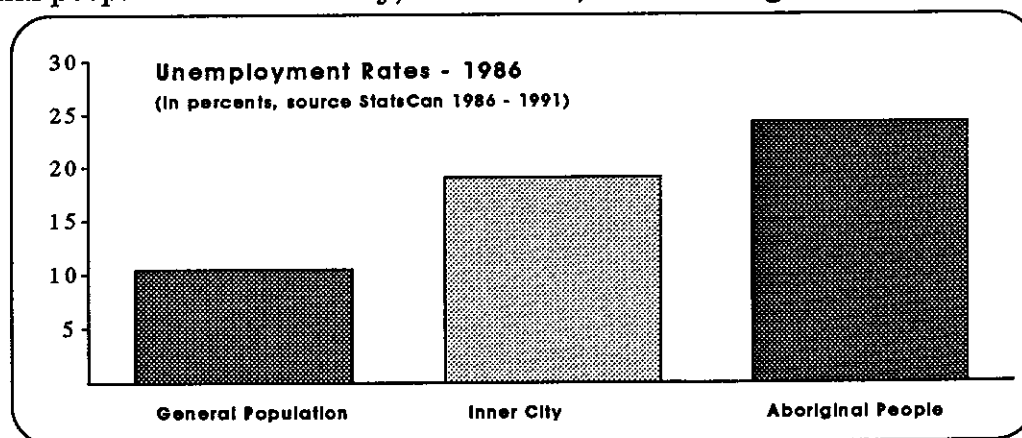
The following recommendations have been taken from the reports and interviews cited in the background material:

- ♦ **Expand employment training programming opportunities in the inner city.**
- ♦ **Focus especially on the needs of inner city youth.**
- ♦ **Improve post-secondary professional training programs located in the inner city, for inner city aboriginal people.**
- ♦ **Expand not-for-profit or regulated casual labour services for aboriginal inner city people.**
- ♦ **Offer holistic services which address more than simply employment skills, but also barriers to employment.**
- ♦ **Plan for increased employment in the inner city through community, business, and government partnership.**

B) Background

Native Counselling Services ²⁰ has found that employment was the main reason for aboriginal people to come to Edmonton. Furthermore, many more aboriginal people had arrived in the city within the past five years than was the case for the general population. A significant percentage of aboriginal people new to the city locate in the downtown core.

Unemployment rates in the inner city are well above those in the city as a whole. Unemployment rates are also higher among aboriginal people than for the population as a whole. It can only be assumed that unemployment rates among aboriginal people in the inner city, if available, would be higher still:



While it has been stated that "gainful socialized work" is the "raison d'etre" of urban life²¹, almost all studies of the issue believe there are insufficient programs address the employment needs of inner city people, particularly Native inner city residents. The 1990 Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Task Force report²² found that "the inner city provides little in the way of employment for unskilled workers."²³

The Bissell Centre runs a casual labour matching pool, however it offers no services specifically designed for aboriginal people. A staff person at the program indicated that "twenty to twenty-five percent of the clientele is Native."²⁴ The federal government has recently engaged a consultant to carry out a needs assessment on services for casual labourers in the inner city.²⁵

A sub-committee of the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities produced a 1992 report on youth employment which concluded among other things that "many unemployed inner-city youth do not use available community resources ... many inner city youth are in a state of constant crisis ... many Aboriginal young adults do not feel comfortable with either their own background or with mainstream society."²⁶

Native Employment Services of Alberta has an office in Edmonton. Its services include employment counselling, job readiness, job search techniques, etc. Currently, NESA has no special services for aboriginal people in the inner city, although staff indicated that a broad range of specialized services are needed, especially for youth.²⁷ It was also stressed that there is a need for holistic services, which address employment and lifestyle issues.

~~There have been various attempts to establish community economic development enterprises in the inner city. To date these have not enjoyed success due to lack of funding.~~

The Native Women's Pre-employment Training Program is offered through Grant MacEwan Community College. Approximately 75 Native women access the training program each year. The great majority live in the inner city. About half graduate, which is well below the 85% in the College's other career development program. The program co-ordinator identified a need for increased literacy, the addressing of family violence and substance abuse issues, and parenting support services as factors which would improve program success rates. Of the women who do graduate, 85% are in training, further education, or employment one year after graduation. In the past few months, there has been a marked increase in demand for the program: for the upcoming course, there are 54 applicants for 25 positions.²⁸

The federal government has recognized exceptionally high levels of unemployment amongst the aboriginal people. In response to this concern and the need to involve the community in finding solutions, it has recently implemented the "Pathways" aboriginal employment and training strategy.²⁹ The Indian and Metis people are in

partnership on committees directing the allocation of funds on a national, regional and local level. However, within this area few programs are being delivered to inner city aboriginal people. Currently training and job readiness programs are offered in north-east Edmonton at the Ben Calf Robe School (upgrading and work experience only, waiting list of 100), at the Career Institute, and Grierson Centre (aboriginal federal inmates approaching release only).

Several staff of employment readiness and social service agencies expressed reservations about the focus of many employment readiness programs³⁰. It was felt some programs encouraged students to develop resumes for potential employers which exaggerated the client's skills. Further, work experience placements were not always properly planned or taken seriously enough by the placement agency. Also, several interviewees felt some of the programs focussed more upon self-esteem than real job training.

Connie Leonard works on employment issues with aboriginal inmates at the Edmonton Remand Centre. She feels neither federal nor provincial programs are adequate to meet the needs of aboriginal people in the inner city. There are not enough places in the programs that exist, and program planners "never talk to the people who would be served by new programs."³¹

Studies have indicated that aboriginal Edmontonians are over-represented in unskilled work, and under-represented in professional employment³². As a result, there are not a large number of mentors in the employment field for Native youth. Programs in Winnipeg have combated this problem through establishing a downtown campus of the University of Manitoba, where inner city people, largely aboriginal, can obtain degrees in teaching and social work.

E) 4. Housing

A) Recommendations

These recommendations have been taken from the reports and interviews cited in the background on housing, below:

- ♦ **Build or renovate 200 units of affordable social housing in the inner city per year, for the next three years.**
- ♦ **Enforce safety regulations in inner city rooming houses.**
- ♦ **Designate land in inner city for social housing development.**
- ♦ **Ensure low income residential use of the Jasper East area is retained.**

B) Background

Poor housing has long been identified as major issue in the inner city. Inadequate housing can be identified in several ways, including lack of affordable housing, crowded housing, and physically inadequate housing. The inner city faces all three of these problems to a degree greater than any other part of the City.³³

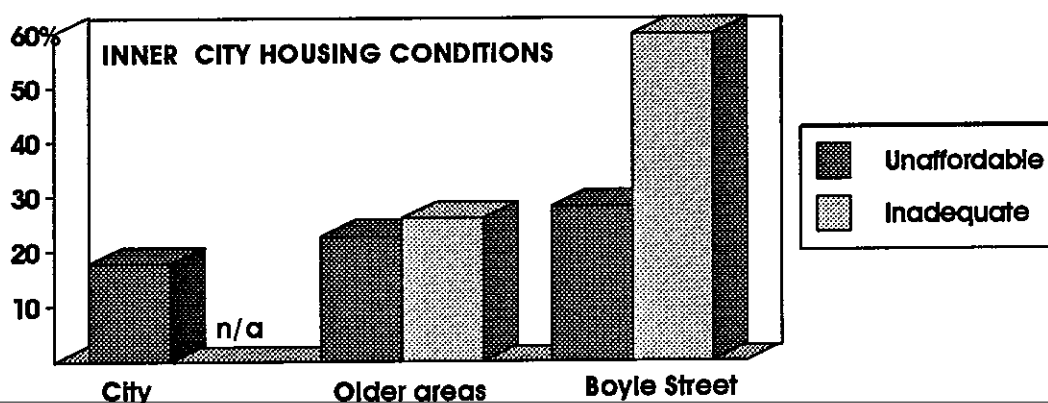
INCIDENCE OF HOUSING PROBLEMS IN OLDER AREAS OF EDMONTON

(Inner City Housing Need and Demand Study - 1990)

LEGEND

1987 was International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The event encouraged local community agencies to develop the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness and to lobby government to address obvious inner city housing problems. In its 1987 report "No Place Like Home"³⁴, the Coalition identified homelessness among inner city people and aboriginal people as serious issues: "there could be as many as 218 homeless single Native men ... as many as 74 homeless single Native women ... as many as 70 homeless Native families in Edmonton."³⁵

The provincial and municipal governments responded to the concerns of the community agencies. A tripartite committee was struck which co-ordinated the development of the 1990 *Inner City Housing Need and Demand Study*. This report quantified the housing problems in the inner city³⁶. The report concluded that "there are over 2,200 households in the inner city living in inadequate (e.g. crowded or poor physical) conditions":



Subsequent to the publication of the report, 200 units of subsidized housing per year for three years have been proposed for the inner city³⁷. Even if they are all built, less than a third of the pressing inner city housing issues will have been addressed. To date only 120 new or renovated units have been delivered.³⁸

The local board of health and the fire department have formed the Safe Housing Committee to improve safety of existing rooming houses. Twenty-two of 128 rooming houses were found to be unsafe³⁹, while the majority required some upgrading to be fully acceptable.

Metis Urban Housing Corporation has in excess of one hundred subsidized units in the older and low-income areas of Edmonton. However, none of these units is in Boyle Street or McCauley. Another aboriginal housing corporation, Canative Housing, has 2 units in McCauley. Native housing corporations are sometimes unwilling to develop or purchase housing in the core inner city, preferring to hold properties in family oriented working class neighbourhoods.

The City of Edmonton is currently reviewing its land acquisition, holding, and development policies. The Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness and the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing are proposing new policies so that the City would play a much greater role in promoting low-income housing development in high-need areas. Currently there is no land in the inner city set aside for social housing.

The Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation is planning to redevelop the area surrounding the farmer's market east of 97th Street. This area includes several hundred units of low income housing, primarily for singles. A high percentage of the residents of this area is aboriginal. There are no guarantees that this housing will be replaced by equivalent stocks of low-rental units.⁴⁰

Interviews with aboriginal people frequently reveal incidents where discrimination or perceived discrimination has occurred. However, aboriginal people generate a very small number of human rights complaints in either employment or housing: "Northern Region (Alberta) had 232 docketed complaints, 16 of which were claims of race discrimination on the basis of being Native Indian." (1990-91)⁴¹.

Don Carmichael is a housing outreach worker at the Boyle Street Co-op. He confirms that discrimination is commonplace against aboriginals looking for housing: "there is...some blatant discrimination [but] a much greater amount of hidden racism".⁴² One landlord told him "look, I don't want to waste your time, we don't rent to Native people, we don't want to start a reservation here." More commonly, however, Native people are simply given the run-around, told their references will be checked, and then told when they go back that either the place has been rented or that their references didn't check out. Mr. Carmichael attributed the low number of official discrimination complaints by Native people to the many other factors often complicating the lives of his aboriginal service users: "[complaints] just aren't a top priority."

E) 5. Substance Abuse

1) Recommendations

These recommendations have been taken from the reports and interviews discussed in the background section:

- ♦ **Expand alcoholism treatment services to inner city aboriginal people. Suggestions included education, storefront office, expand outreach and intervention programs.**
- ♦ **Continue efforts to reduce consumption of non-beverage alcohol.**
- ♦ **Establish a detoxification centre for women.**

2) Background

The terms alcoholism, Native people, and skid row are all intertwined in the public consciousness. While some of the popular images are racist myths, it is evident to any observer that alcoholism has a devastating impact on many aboriginal people in the inner city. Despite this, there are few services specifically designed for the aboriginal inner city resident with substance abuse problems.

The Police Commission Task Force on Inner City Violence found that many Native people arriving in the inner city are "soon enveloped in a lifestyle characterized by unemployment, social assistance, violence, and alcohol abuse."⁴³

Alcohol abuse and conflict with the law are strongly correlated. One major study indicated that "a figure of 50-60% alcohol use by [violent] offenders in North America seems sufficiently reliable."⁴⁴ There are also many reports indicating aboriginal people frequently come into conflict with the law as a result of the effects of intoxication: "the Indian ancestry population is disproportionately involved in alcohol-related offences."⁴⁵

The George Spady Centre is a detoxification centre for the public inebriate⁴⁶. It is funded through the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). There are two programs. The first is the overnight shelter program. It allows people to sleep off a drunk on mattresses on the floor. There is also a three or more day detoxification program for those wishing to begin the process of recovery. During 1991, there were 36,000 admissions to the Centre, almost 100 per day every day of the year. Between sixty and seventy-five percent of the clientele is Native. Among women, about 95% is Native. Cecilia Blasetti, Centre Executive Director, believes that there is a need for a detoxification program for women. The Centre cannot accommodate women in its detoxification program, and there is only one other centre which can, located downtown. This is a problem if the client has a disagreement with that centre's staff.

The George Spady Centre has been criticized by members of the aboriginal community because of its policy of not permitting aboriginal people to speak their own languages in the Centre. Centre staff emphasized that this rule exists only for safety reasons, and that it is imposed only with discretion.

Marie Peters is a counsellor with Poundmaker's Outpatient Centre⁴⁷. Her program is funded by AADAC & designed to serve mainly aboriginal people, and provides information, referral, and counselling on substance abuse and related issues. The Centre is located downtown in the offices of the AADAC Day Treatment Centre. Ms. Peters believes there is a need for considerably expanded staffing for her centre, a stand-alone location possibly in the inner city, and more aboriginal psychologists and other counsellors. In the past year, the Centre counselled 540 people, but has only two counselling staff, and no administrative staff. There is a long waiting list for aboriginal in-patient services.

Non-beverage alcohol consumption in the inner city is a particular concern. The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission sponsored a 1990 examination of Lysol drinking in the inner city⁴⁸, following many years of agitation by staff of inner city agencies. The author of the study picked up 1,644 Lysol cans during a two week period, and estimated that "between 250 and 500 people in the inner city regularly or occasionally drink Lysol." Following the publication of the report, the inner city agencies pressed for restrictions on the sale of Lysol, expanded opening hours for the inner city liquor store, and additional services from AADAC. The first two proposals have been implemented⁴⁹.

Despite the prevalence of alcohol-related problems in the inner city, AADAC's direct presence in the area is very limited. An AADAC worker visits the Boyle McCauley Health Centre one afternoon each week, and has a three-week waiting list⁵⁰. Dr. Kammerer, Clinical Director of the Health Centre, believes alcohol treatment and referral services need to be expanded considerably, preferably through establishment of a storefront AADAC office.

Irene Kerr manages youth programs for the Boyle Street Co-op. The great majority of the youth served by the agency are aboriginal. Ms. Kerr echoes the views of other inner city agency workers: services are inadequate, they are not sufficiently focussed on specialized needs of inner city people, long waiting periods for service are especially difficult for inner city people, there is inadequate treatment follow-up. To some extent, different substances are abused in the inner city (e.g. solvents, non-beverage alcohols, and prescription drug abuse). These problems may require specialized research and services, none of which are currently in place. There is a high incidence of intravenous drug abuse.

Rick Guthrie manages intake programs at the Bissell Centre. He echoes the comments of Ms. Kerr⁵¹. The services of the existing programs are overloaded

(especially those for aboriginal people), and are not geared to the needs of inner city people. The intake procedure involves a wait of several weeks between initial intake and referral to an appropriate program, by which time many inner city residents have either disappeared back into the cycle of substance abuse, have moved and cannot be located, or are no longer as enthusiastic. Mr. Guthrie emphasized that follow-up services are more important among inner city alcoholics, because they do not have the same circle of family and acquaintances who can support the person through recovery. Frequently, the only support they have is from agency people and other street people.

AADAC has never completed a study on substance abuse problems in the inner city, apart from the 1990 Lysol report. Indeed the only Canadian reference on alcoholism among aboriginals on skid row dates back to 1971, and was published by the Government of Canada Indian and Northern Affairs⁵². The report's conclusions retain relevance:

"The skid row Indian is unlikely to find in the standard or mainstream arguments against drinking any real strength until his own socio-economic situation is radically altered. Until that time he will probably go on drinking, just because drinking is or seems to be more pleasant than not drinking."

E) 6. Family Violence

In 1991, the Family Violence Committee of the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities produced an extensive report on "*Family Violence: Breaking the Cycle.*" In part, the report reflects the findings of the research undertaken on family violence in Northeast Edmonton by the Edmonton Police Service.

The report was wide ranging and comprehensive. it concluded as follows:

- ◆Violence is a learned behaviour that is not acceptable.
- ◆Violence in families can be self-perpetuating through generations.
- ◆Family violence encompasses violence against women, children, men, the elderly and the disabled.
- ◆Violence in families contributes to crime and violence in the community.
- ◆A violent family environment encourages the use of violence to resolve problems.
- ◆Family violence severely impacts the whole community.

The report provides a range of actions that are needed to more effectively deal with this issue.

In 1988, the Nechi Institute published a report. "*The Spirit Weeps*" by Tony Martens. This book looks at family violence and child abuse, with a strong emphasis on the impact on Native communities. While the book does not differentiate the reserve setting from the inner city, several of the contributing factors are similar and are highlighted below:

1) Negative self-image has likely been affected by racial stereotyping and/or prejudice.

2) Many Natives have experienced some form of institutionalization such as residential school, foster care or imprisonment; affecting problem solving abilities, parenting skills, ability to trust and form intimate relationships.

3) Low levels of education increase sense of isolation and negative image.

4) For males, precarious employment status, economic insecurity, and a sense of powerlessness may result in feelings of inferiority and need for control.

5) For many males, high stress will be linked to low income, poor housing, family crises; to be complicated by other forms of abuse, e.g. drug and alcohol and violence.

6) Some Native women may have been raised with distorted values placed on sexual activity.

7) Many Native families face an atmosphere of denial, that allows the abuse to continue; this may be created by loyalty in the community, the fear of gossip, living with "rules" that support and reinforce denial (children adapt to the dysfunction around them by denying that abuse exists), and socialization that results as incest occurs over a number of generations.

8) Grieving affects the Native family deeply and repeatedly, due to the many problems facing them; however, the grieving process often results in people being locked in the anger stage resulting in blame and mistrust making it difficult for the community to deal with deep seated issues.

The Native community needs to have a "family" or "extended support system" available to work through issues as family violence. This applies to both reserve and inner city communities.

E) 7. Criminal Justice System

The most comprehensive study on the criminal justice system as it relates to Aboriginal people in Alberta is the "Cawsey Report". In March, 1991, the Task Force chaired by Justice R. A. Cawsey released its report, "The Criminal Justice System and its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta", making some 340 recommendations to address the over-representation of Native people in the criminal justice system. The study does not specifically focus on inner city issues, however, problems and concerns with the criminal justice system among urban Aboriginal populations are addressed.

The report examines: Policing, Legal Aid, Courts, Corrections, Native Counselling Services of Alberta, Jurisdiction, Government Departments, Aboriginal Youth, Women, and Aboriginal Perspectives to Justice among other areas. Some of the recommendations of the main findings include:

- that a clear policy statement be developed by government on the criminal justice system in Alberta in conjunction with the various components in the system to achieve the goal.
- that the criminal justice system be brought back to the communities it serves.
- that Aboriginal people be involved in the decision-making at all levels of the criminal justice system including service delivery.
- that Aboriginal representation in the criminal justice system include the involvement of Aboriginal Elders.
- that a shift in focus of government services for Aboriginal people move away from incarceration and toward prevention.
- that youth and Aboriginal people in urban centres be given a much higher priority as they have previously received little attention.**
- that intensive "indigenization" of the criminal justice system be implemented including flexible sentencing as a step toward a system more sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal people.
- that a monitoring process for the implementation of recommendations accepted by the Government be effective and objective with strong Aboriginal participation.⁵³

The Task Force identified two of the most important areas of concern as the plight of the young people and Aboriginal people in urban centers. Aboriginal youth live in extremely disadvantageous conditions with little chance of improvement unless a concerted effort is made by various levels of government and community groups. Prevention programs must be implemented for Aboriginal youth focusing on education, recreation, and employment. In addition, many require treatment for drug and alcohol as well as post-treatment support. With fifty percent of the Aboriginal population under twenty years of age, and with the Aboriginal population increasing faster than non-Aboriginal population, it becomes imperative that the needs of Aboriginal youth be addressed.⁵⁴

In the year ending December, 1989, 1451 Aboriginal youths were in young offender centres; 36% of the young offenders of the centres' populations were Indian or Metis. More than 60% of the Aboriginal young offenders reported a home address in a major urban area. ⁵⁶ Although most of the youths from the young offender centres come from urban areas, many of them want to be in a less secure institution such as a wilderness camp staffed by Aboriginals. The Task Force maintains that although the young offender centres are world class facilities staffed by dedicated people, they are still jails with a level of security not required for most Aboriginal youths. ⁵⁶

Aboriginal youths have special needs when they come into contact with the police and the courts. Many of the urban youth have no roots and lack family support. The young offender centres may be the only available alternative for the youth because the police or young offender's court are unable to find suitable accommodation for them. As a result, they are frequently denied release pending trial ⁵⁷. The pre-trial waiting period can be quite extensive. In Edmonton and Calgary, young offenders are required to wait up to six months for their trial. If a young offender pleads guilty, a trial will not be held for a minimum of three months; if the youth is out of custody, the trial will not be held for six months. Thus, the Task Force recognizes a pressing need for more youth emergency shelters in addition to other improvements in the system. ⁵⁸

The second area the Task Force identifies as consistently overlooked are the concerns of urban Aboriginal people. Fifty to sixty percent of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders come from major urban centres. In addition, no easily identifiable Aboriginal community structures exist in these communities. Thus, the problems of urban Aboriginal people are more difficult to study. It becomes more serious as the number of Aboriginal people migrating to the urban centres continues to rise. The problems associated with urban Aboriginal people require urgent attention with all levels of government involved, and the service delivery agencies and the Aboriginal community. ⁵⁹

A recent "Native Offender Study" (February, 1992), was developed by the Department of the Alberta Solicitor General to discern the geographic distribution of the Native offender population in the province. Last year, two surveys were conducted, in July and December, to determine their distribution and residency. Results of the one-day count of Native offenders on December 2, 1991 indicate the majority of the urban Aboriginal offenders reside in Edmonton:

- of the 1,095 Native adult and young offenders in custody in Alberta, 355 listed Edmonton and 52 listed Calgary as their places of residency.
- 2,563 Native adult and young offenders were under a community supervision program in Alberta.

- of the 1,469 Status Indians and Metis in custody or under community supervision not residing on a reserve or settlement, 614 reside in Edmonton and 134 reside in Calgary.

- of the 450 Aboriginal young offenders in custody or under community supervision not residing on a reserve or settlement, 190 reside in Edmonton and 26 reside in Calgary. ⁶⁰

The study also refers to the Cawsey Report's 103 recommendations challenging Alberta Correctional Services to review existing policies, practices and programs, expand community corrections initiatives and increase involvement of Native communities in the correctional system. It is noted that such improvements depend on accurately identifying areas with significant needs, forecasting trends in the offender population, and prioritizing programs accordingly with limited government resources.

The Native Offender study also lists several programs and initiatives that have been introduced during the past decade by Alberta Correctional Services to address the over-representation of Native offenders in the provincial correctional system:

- Native cultural and spiritual values are considered in developing correctional centre and community corrections programming.

- Native Program Coordinators were hired to coordinate cultural and spiritual activities and programs in the correctional centres.

- Native involvement is encouraged in the development of several community corrections programs in the province.

- services contracted to Native organizations have been implemented in several areas of the province including contracting the Grierson Community Correctional Centre in Edmonton to Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

- a three-day Native Awareness Training program is offered as part of the recruitment training curriculum.

- Native recruitment initiatives have been undertaken in conjunction with community colleges and government departments. ⁶¹

Locally, the Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Task Force Report (December, 1990) provides some insight into inner city issues. The inter-agency task force formed in January 1990 with a mandate to develop strategies to reduce violent crime in the inner city. The report identifies problem locations, causes of violent crime within identified boundaries and strategies to reduce the incidence of crimes against persons in the inner city.

Violent crime statistics were compared over a four-year period from January 1, 1987 to December 31, 1990. Comparative statistics were provided for three areas including the inner city, a marginal area and a city-wide scope. The study lists characteristics associated with violent crime in the target area (along 96 Street including the lanes from 102 to 104 Avenues) as follows:

- 70% of Boyle Street/McCauley population are renters living in the community for three years or less.
- a disproportionate number of transient and homeless Native males.
- a high level of unemployment (32% of residents have full-time employment).
- a high rate of absentee landlords.
- 60% are single adults.
- almost 80% of the renter household incomes are less than \$15,000.
- there are a large number of run down rooming houses and badly maintained single family dwellings.
- alcohol or drugs were evident in almost reported cases of violent crimes where injuries occurred.
- knives were used in nearly 77% of the violent crimes incurring injuries.
- between 33% and 45% of all crimes reported in the Boyle Street and McCauley areas relate to crimes against persons (violent crime) as opposed to 12.7% of all city-wide crimes.
- statistically, more Native persons are involved in violent crime, either as victims or perpetrators, than any other group.
- in the majority of cases, violence is directed toward family members or acquaintances.⁶²

In addition to addressing Native issues, the task force includes recommendations with respect to: police sensitivity to inner city concerns, reducing the opportunity to commit crime, full banking facilities for social service recipients, reintegration of offenders and other institutional releases, alternative sentencing, care for children, employment, prostitution, family violence, and housing. The recommendations to address Native issues are as follows:

- the Edmonton Police Service (E.P.S.) actively recruit Native persons to become police officers and increase involvement with Native service delivery organizations to enhance the relationship between them.
- that a video on life in the inner city and associated problems be produced in cooperation with Native agencies to be used as an educational tool by elders in rural Native communities.
- that a member of the Aboriginal community be appointed to the Police Commission.
- that funding be increased to Native service delivery agencies for additional outreach and in-home counselling resources, and for alcohol and drug treatment of Edmonton's Native residents.
- that an aggressive outreach and intervention program be established with sufficient staff to deal directly with inner city alcohol abusers.
- that a facility be located within walking distance of the inner city to house representatives from Native service delivery organizations to provide services for the inner city Native people.

-that the outpatient aftercare program for alcohol and drug abusers include access to recognized elders and access to a sweatlodge within walking distance of the inner city.

-that Native organizations and elders collectively address the serious family violence problem within their community.

-that helping professions and mainstream agencies make a concerted effort to recruit and train Native people to deal effectively with Native issues and their clients.

-that a twenty-four hour youth 'hot-line' be implemented for Native and non-Native youth in crisis, to provide counselling services and referrals to appropriate agencies.

-that Native people be involved in recommending alternative sentencing for their own people. ⁶³

Some of the above recommendations have been implemented including the appointment of an Aboriginal representative to the Edmonton Police Commission, as well as initiatives of the Edmonton Police Service. The E.P.S. has assigned a Native Liaison Officer to work with the Aboriginal community and the Police Service; a video production was completed to create an awareness about the undesirable inner city conditions as a means to deter Aboriginal youth from being drawn into the inner city; recruitment initiatives are being implemented to attract Aboriginal people to careers as Police Officers. In addition, the Edmonton Police Service and Poundmaker's Lodge provide a Native awareness program for police service personnel as well as utilizing the services of Elders for instruction and consultation. ⁶⁴

Identification of the gaps in services of the criminal justice system in Edmonton's inner city requires input from the inner city service delivery agencies, from the Aboriginal community and most importantly those who have "fallen through the cracks", the inner city residents and those who are incarcerated in penal and correctional institutions. Obtaining accurate information about Aboriginal inner city issues is a difficult process as studies have not been done in that area; there is no representative "voice" in the inner city community; there is a lack of obvious community structure, and the nature and characteristics associated with inner city life is complex. With respect to the Cawsey Report, a steering committee of representatives from government departments responsible for the criminal justice system in Alberta and the Indian and Metis political organizations are preparing a response following consultations with Aboriginal communities in the province.

¹ The estimate of aboriginal inner city average incomes is calculated thus: a) average income of aboriginal Edmontonians expressed as a proportion of average income of the whole population. b) This proportion is applied to average inner city incomes.

Thus if average personal income were \$20,000, aboriginal average income were \$15,000, and average inner city income were \$12,000, average income of aboriginal inner city residents would be $15,000/20,000 \times 12,000 = \$9,000$. The base figures come from the 1986 census, and an allowance of 13.5% has been applied to cover wage inflation to December 31 1991.

Given the several steps of extrapolation, it must be understood these figures are *an estimate only*.

² Anna S. Pellatt, "Poverty in the Schools: Strategies for Change", prepared for the Workshop on Poverty and the Schools, Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation, November 29, 1989.

³ Ibid., p.2.

⁴ Ibid., pp 4-5.

⁵ Ibid., p.4.

⁶ Alberta Education, "Achieving the Vision" 1991 Report.

⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸ Ibid., p.21.

⁹ Edmonton Public School Board, "Plan to Meet the Schooling needs of Native Students", May 21, 1991.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 36. Note: The School Act, Section 16 defines "alternative program" as an education program that emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion, or subject matter, or that uses a particular teaching philosophy but that is **not a special education program, or a religious program offered by a separate school board**.

¹¹ Ibid., p.3.

¹² Edmonton Catholic School District, "Native Education Programs in Edmonton Catholic Schools", April, 1991.

¹³ Prairie Wool Communications, "Demographic Characteristics of Natives in Edmonton", June - October, 1984, prepared for Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

¹⁴ A. Levasseur and E. Passmore, "Aboriginal Students Skills Development- Needs Assessment", prepared for Grant MacEwan Community College, Community Education Division, May 31, 1991.

¹⁵ Minutes of Meetings of the Native Issues Working Group, July 1991 - January 1992, Edmonton, AB.

¹⁶ Boyle Street Coop, Youth Unit, "Native Violent Crime Task Force - Subcommittee on Native Issues: Recommendations on Education Initiatives", October, 1991.

¹⁷ Adele Arcand, "Report on Native Education for the Native Violent Crime Task Force Subcommittee on Native Issues", December 13, 1991.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.4.

²⁰ Alberta Native Affairs Secretariat and Native Counselling Services of Alberta, "Demographic Characteristics of Natives in Edmonton", July 1985.

²¹ Jonathan Murphy, "Edmonton's Inner City, an economic development strategy", Boyle Street Community Services Co-op, 1985, page 13.

²² Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Taskforce, "Discussion Paper and Recommendations", Edmonton, December 1990.

²³ Ibid., p.13.

²⁴ Interview with Melody Mochniuk from Bissell Centre Casual Labour Office, February 25 1992.

²⁵ Interview with Heather Halpenny, Crocker Consulting, February 25 1992,

²⁶ Mayor's Taskforce on Safer Cities, "Young Adult Employment: Investing in our Future."

²⁷ Telephone interview with Jackie Houle, NESAs, February 24 1992.

²⁸ Telephone interview with Donna Mae Winqvist, GMCC, February 25 1992.

²⁹ Government of Canada Employment and Immigration, "Pathways to success: Aboriginal Employment and Training Strategy." Ottawa, 1990.

- ³⁰ Interviews with Hope Hunter, Irene Kerr (Boyle Street Co-op), Eileen Passmore (Grant MacEwan Community College), March 1992.
- ³¹ Interview with Connie Leonard, February 25 1992.
- ³² Edmonton Social Planning Council, "Edmonton's Native People: Surviving in a Racist Society". Edmonton, 1991, pp. 2-3.
- ³³ Larrie Taylor Architects, "Edmonton Inner City Housing Need and Demand Study". Edmonton, 1990.
- ³⁴ Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness, "No Place Like Home." Edmonton, 1987.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.29.
- ³⁶ Chart adapted from the "Edmonton Inner City Housing Need and Demand Study", March 1990 draft, p.31a, & appendix one.
- ³⁷ Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, "A Place to Call Home", Edmonton, 1991.
- ³⁸ Interview with Ann Harvey, Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, February 26 1992.
- ³⁹ First Reading, v.10, issue 1, February 1992, p.7.
- ⁴⁰ See for example Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation, "Old Towne Market Area Residents Survey", 1990.
- ⁴¹ Letter to Jon Murphy from Louise Borlé, Alberta Human Rights Commission, March 17 1992.
- ⁴² Interview with Don Carmichael, Boyle Street Co-op Housing Unit, March 24 1992.
- ⁴³ Task Force on Inner City Violence, *ibid.*, p.14.
- ⁴⁴ Addiction Research Foundation, "Alcohol and Crimes of Violence", Toronto, 1976, p.14.
- ⁴⁵ John H. Hylton, "The Native Offender in Saskatchewan", in Crime in Canadian Society, ed. Sliverman and Teeran, Toronto 1986, p.279.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with Cecilia Blasetti, George Spady Centre, March 3 1992.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with Marie Peters, Poundmakers Outpatient Centre, March 3 1992.
- ⁴⁸ Harvey Voogd, "Lysol Abuse in Edmonton's Inner City", Edmonton, 1990, (i).
- ⁴⁹ See the Boyle McCauley News, February 1992, "Highlights of the NBA committee report", p.3.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with Dr. Hubert Kammerer, Clinical Director, Boyle McCauley Health Centre, March 3 1992.
- ⁵¹ Interview with Rick Guthrie, Bissell Centre, March 9 1992.
- ⁵² Hugh Brody, Indians on Skid Row, Ottawa, 1971.
- ⁵³ Cawsey, Mr. Justice R. A., "Justice on Trial " Report of the Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta. V.1. Main Report. March, 1991. pp. 1.5-1.7.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 1.6-1.7.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p.8.57.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p.8.59.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 8.61.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p.6.46.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 1.7.
- ⁶⁰ Alberta Solicitor General, "Native Offender Study", Correctional Services Division, February 4, 1992.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- ⁶² "Edmonton Inner City Violent Crime Task Force Report", December, 1990. pp. 6-7.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p.15
- ⁶⁴ Interview with Sergeant Vern Colley, Native Liaison Officer, Edmonton Police Service, March, 1992.

F) Inventory of services offered by inner city agencies

Note: this inventory covers only services offered by agencies located in the inner city. There are of course many services which are available to inner city people offered by organizations located outside the inner city.

Boyle Street Co-op

Family and Adult Outreach Program

The program offers practical problem solving and advocacy for low-income families and singles.

Housing Registry

The housing registry staff maintains an inventory of decent, affordable accommodation available in the inner city. The registry staff match the housing available with people who need housing.

Mental Health Outreach

The mental health outreach program offers practical problem solving for people with mental health issues who wish to remain in the community.

Drop-in Centre

The Drop-in Centre has two programs. Its coffee room offers people the chance to socialize and connect over a coffee. The activities centre has active recreational opportunities, like a pool table, a computer, etc.

Community Room

The community room is an alternative to the Drop-in Centre but is restricted to sober individuals.

Spirituality Room

The spirituality room is a space designated for aboriginal people to practise cultural ceremonies.

Prospects Literacy Centre

Prospects is operated in collaboration with the Edmonton Public School Board. It is an adult literacy learning centre.

HIV Prevention Program

The HIV prevention program provides information for the high risk HIV populations, including injection drug users and people working in the sex trade. In addition to information on safer sex, condoms and a needle exchange are available free of charge.

Boyle Street Co-op School

The Co-op offers an alternative school for youth aged 16 and 17. It uses Alberta Correspondence School curricula and materials and is not part of the regular school system.

Youth Outreach

The youth outreach program connects with street-involved youth, offering them lifestyle alternatives and practical problem solving.

Other programs

The Co-op has other, mainly time-limited programs. Its 'milk for moms' program offers low-income mothers free milk. The 'food for thought' program is planning to establish publicly funded hot meal programs in selected schools in the inner city and northeast Edmonton. The youth computer program encourages street-involved youth to use computers.

Bissell Centre

Children's Recreational Programs

There is a wide variety of programs, mainly for 6-13 year olds.

Camp

Different camp programs are available for adults, seniors, families, and children.

Childcare

Emergency drop-in child care is available, as well as mother's day out childcare. The service can be used to a maximum of one day per week, available for children from zero to grade one.

Adult Drop-in (Friendship Room)

The Friendship Room offers people free coffee and a respite from the street.

Women's Drop-in Centre

This centre offers informal support and a women's lunch program twice a week.

Casual Labour Office

A casual labour office is operated under contract with Canada Employment. Service users needing employment are matched up with employers requiring help.

Banking/ Money Management Program

The program provides a cheque cashing service as well as assistance with budgeting for people living on minimal incomes.

Emergency Services

Food, clothing, household goods, and information and referral.

Economy Store

Offers individuals and families low-cost clothing and household furnishings. Works with Bissell Emergency Services to provide for those who cannot afford to purchase goods.

Other

The Bissell Centre offers numerous educational, recreational, and social programs, lifestyle improvement, etc.
examples, parenting, pre-natal, photography, gym, sports

Operation Friendship

The agency's services are offered to inner city people *over fifty-five years* of age.

Drop-in Programming

The agency operates two inner city drop-in centres; the McCauley Centre and the Alberta Avenue Centre. Aside from the food programs mentioned below, the Centres offer recreational programming, encouraging the service users to use facilities available in the city and elsewhere.

Food Program

An extensive meal program is operated from each centre, including breakfast, lunch, and evening meals. The program recognizes that many inner city seniors do not have access to proper cooking facilities.

Housing

Operation Friendship Housing Society operates over two hundred units of accommodation for seniors with a variety of living skills and lifestyles. In addition, there is a Housing Registry which matches seniors with landlords, as well as assisting with subsidy applications, maintaining the person in the accommodation, etc.

Helping Hands

This program recognizes that many seniors cannot get around to the bank and stores. Lack of mobility is a major factor in early institutionalization. The Helping Hands program provides specialized help with shopping, medical appointments, banking, etc. The worker ensures the housebound client is receiving an adequate diet and helps them deal with medical, financial issues, etc.

Outreach

The outreach program assists seniors deal with issues like problems with pensions, entitlement to various government programs, basic counselling, information and referral, mental health problems, etc.

Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation

Note: The City Centre Church Corporation provided information on aboriginal representation among their staff and clients. While it was not requested nor received from the other agencies, we felt it would be interesting.

Women's Emergency Accommodation

Residence for homelessness and transient women, emergency and longer term, including food, clothing, shelter, transportation and referral. 11 of 17 staff people are Native. Serves 250-300 women each month, on average 30% of residents are Native.

CROSSROADS Outreach Program

Street outreach to people involved in prostitution, especially in the Drag area, and social support, referral and other assistance to help juveniles (and others) get off the street. 1000 clients since June 1989; 25-30% are Native, mostly female. One of four staff is Native.

Community Chaplaincy - Mustard Seed Street Church

Counselling for ex-offenders and drop-in coffee house, clothing, food, employment and other assistance for ex-offenders and street people in the Boyle-McCauley area. 300 different people each month, approximately 25% Native, mostly males.

Edmonton City Schools Nutrition Snack Program

Nutritious mid-morning snacks to 4,367 kindergarten through Grade 6 children in 22 elementary schools in downtown and northeast Edmonton, every school day. Native population of schools ranges from less than 5% to about 40%.

Boyle McCauley Health Centre

The Boyle McCauley Health Centre provides health and related services to residents of the inner city. While the Health Centre already serves a large number of aboriginal people, it is currently examining how it might better incorporate aboriginal culture, practices, and needs into its programs. Current services include: operates a family practice with comprehensive medical treatment including follow-up care with special emphasis on pre- and post-natal care. provides community outreach and home visiting by nurse practitioners which includes assessment and treatment, follow-up care and health education. makes referrals to health and social service agencies.

provides foot care clinics, home visiting, maternal child care program, and community outreach.
delivers and AIDS (HIV) prevention program for injection drug users which includes a needle exchange program and bleach kits.

George Spady Centre

The George Spady Centre provides overnight accommodation for the public inebriate. It also offers a three-day detoxification program for abusers of alcohol and drugs, and a coffee drop-in.

Urban Manor

This agency provides 64 beds for hard-to-house, indigent, and transient men. Room and board is provided in dormitory accommodation, and referrals are made for other needed services.

People In Need Shelter

PIN provides room and board accommodation for men and women who have been discharged from hospital but still require support and follow-up from hospitals or other agencies.

Adrian Hope Youth Centre

The Centre is a program of the Métis Nation of Alberta. It provides social and recreational opportunities for Metis and other aboriginal and non-aboriginal youth.

Other Services

There are some other services and programs located in the inner city. To date they have not participated in joint service delivery planning for aboriginal people or other client groups. There are also some smaller programs which have not been listed.

G. A Community Service Model for the Inner City

The inner city provides a living environment for a variety of people, including those who have lived in the inner city for many years and want to remain in the neighbourhood they know, those who choose to live in the inner city and want to create a healthy climate for their community and those who are forced to live in the inner city due to their economic circumstances and their inability to obtain the education and skills for full time employment and the benefits that this brings.

The "community" provides a range of social support systems to assist individuals in achieving personal and collective goals. The "service" system, provided by community agencies, is expected to complement the "natural support systems" provided by family and the community. Given the range of needs in the inner city and the breakdown or absence of family/community support for many, the demand for community/service support is high and the resource capacity is generally inadequate to meet the demand.

In order to improve the "community service" system, it is important to understand how the "community" and "service" systems work and mutually support one another. It is important to have a "model" of this relationship; i.e. a means to look at the community service system in order to discuss proposals and their possible impact. This section describes a "model" or a "framework" for improving services for individuals in the inner city.

The model that is presented here is outlined in terms of specific components. Over time, it will be important to clarify how one component relates to another and how change/improvement in one area impacts another. This clarification will be practical if undertaken within a policy/need area e.g. housing or within an area designated for proposed action/coordination.

The model is seen to have the following components:

1) individuals

- individual responsibility and right to choose pace and direction for improvement of quality of life; to manage ones own life

2) family, quasi-family and community support

- an "extended aboriginal family" support system for individuals facing urban adjustment in the inner city; having social support
- a community process to create support for different needs (where considered important); e.g. first entry to the community, post incarceration, etc.

3) agency support systems and service provision

- a support system that establishes trust and confidence and a bridge to taking the first steps towards a goal; e.g. a job, adult upgrading, skill development
- collaborative processes between agencies to "help" different "need tracks" and to bridge between "delivery agencies"

4) interagency communications, information and support systems

- a resource centre/system to enable agencies to be kept up-to-date on available services in the inner city; "community connections"

5) service coordination

- mechanisms to ensure top-down coordination
- avoidance of duplication of services; clarity of contract
- recognize need for choice of service delivery
- "one-stop" shopping - youth services; school referral team

6) training and development support for agency management, staff and caregivers

7) values, vision, strategy

- a strategic planning system for collaboration and coordination where this requires more than informal contact
 - to address identified areas for immediate high priority service improvement/coordination
 - requires agreed "need areas" and strategic action plans
 - vision, needs, stakeholder involvement
 - a better understanding of service needs and services being provided by non-profit agencies
 - clarify vision, outcomes and areas for immediate action
 - clarify mandates, goals and methods of measurement between decision makers and front line staff
 - establish a process of stakeholder involvement based on a culture of listening and using the input received

8) funding, resources, policy commitment

- adequate resources need to be provided for community agencies as increase in needs are caused by downsizing government agencies and programs
- redirect and increase resources
- build trust (reduce gaps) between service providers and decision makers regarding funding
- increase the number of workers; increase salary; establish parity between private, public and non-profit workers
- a policy management system that clarifies intergovernmental responsibility and guidelines/commitment for funding and program support that will be made available to front line agencies

9) balancing access to power; increasing capability to influence

- internal/agency
- external
- more native board members and workers
- more native urban MLA's

10) leadership for change

- build a climate for change; internal/external support
- continuity of support/advocacy for client and followup support
- education of existing workers; give new people "power" and comfort in being heard
- increase native workers in "remand centre": correctional and community advocates
- peer support groups for motivating youth and adults
- genuine recognition/ acknowledgement of non-native agencies as partners
- recognition and transition process for introducing native people and perspective; e.g. cross cultural training
- establish a game plan for affirmative action and system adjustment; team values that allow change to occur
- acknowledge/recognize native workers as internal resources; management should listen and be active in needed adjustment
- seek ways to bridge the "gap", e.g. on-the-job staff exchange

11) client involvement and community participation

- provide access for native clients to native cultural information/ perspective
- empower clients in voicing client satisfaction in the evaluation of services

12) special needs in the aboriginal community

- more native workers with sensitivity to needs
- native process for planning and implementation i.e. circular, small group
- address self- esteem needs in support and service delivery
- use an "expanded" notion of transition (non linear)
- identify funding gaps in the inner city and deal with them
- acknowledge/understand native perspective to healing, implementation, feedback from evaluation
- more aboriginal contacts, resources, elders
- increased cultural awareness for both native and Metis

- a network/contact system for aboriginal partnership building to expand native agency involvement in the inner city; creating a "team" approach between native and other community agencies
- building confidence for aboriginal participation on boards and management

In addition to these components, there are a number of principles or values that should be followed in putting this "community service" model in place:

- involve direction setting decision makers
- involve front line workers in the same room
- involve street knowledge (providers/recipients)
- redefine "helping"
- incorporate stories and "healing" in the process
- base process on the value of positives, 4 directions
- build process on value of sharing, kindness, honesty, trust
- interactive process recognizing growth
- build on inner city people strengths, skills, and abilities they have.

H) Future work areas and strategies

1. HOUSING

A. Racial discrimination in housing

Examine the extent of racial discrimination in all housing sectors (private, non-profit, public).

Develop a plan for overcoming racial discrimination in housing.

B. Identify short-term housing initiatives through co-operation of relevant housing agencies and registries

This would involve Native and non-Native housing agencies, as well as the inner city and native housing registries.

2. HEALING, TALKING CIRCLES, SPIRITUALITY

There is a need to widen the availability of talking circles.

Elder involvement is key, and should be expanded, especially in the mental health system and in schools.

Organizations wishing to begin a talking circle can get contact names for elders, etc., from organizations currently hosting circles.

The Nechi Centre and Poundmaker's Lodge have a key role in this area.

3. LEGAL, JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS SYSTEMS

The scope for action in this area is limited while government response to the Cawsey report is being awaited.

It is recommended that the Inner City Violent Crime Taskforce write to the Government of Alberta requesting information on when and how the government's response to the report will be communicated to the public.

4. STRENGTHEN THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ABORIGINAL PROFESSIONALS AND WORKERS

Aboriginal staff need to have an effective voice in their agencies.

More aboriginal people are needed on the Boards of inner city and other service agencies.

The concept of "healing the caregivers" needs to be implemented more systematically - Nechi Centre has taken a lead in this area.

5. STRENGTHEN INNER CITY FAMILIES, QUASI-FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORKS

More talking circles and community celebrations in the inner city would be a first step.

6. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Services in this area were felt to be inadequate.

Poundmakers Outreach programming should be expanded to meet more inner city needs, especially those of youth.

A strategy must be developed to make existing agencies (e.g. AADAC Detox, George Spady Centre) more open to Aboriginal needs.

A storefront Poundmaker's and/or AADAC office is needed in the inner city. More support must be offered to people before and after attending in-patient programs.

7. EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, EDUCATION

A working group should be established which would:

Identify a continuum of learning and training opportunities which will lead to employment.

Establish an action plan to implement this continuum.

Secure Pathways and/or Provincial funding for individual projects.

Develop an internship program to increase the number of aboriginal staff in inner city agencies, etc.

Examine the quality of existing employment programs.

Find out what services/programs are available to encourage students to stay in school, comparing Edmonton with other cities where programs have been delivered.

8. IN-MIGRATION

Establish programs to raise the awareness of young people in rural areas (settlements, reserves, etc.) about city realities.

Develop a more intensive range of services for people when they do arrive in the city - these could include information cards, billboards, outreach at the bus depot, etc.

It is essential that the services developed maintain the core values of the Aboriginal people. These values include healing; building trust; sharing; story telling; etc. It will be the role of the proposed Council of Agencies, in consultation with the Aboriginal community and elders, to ensure this is the case.

I) A Mechanism for Co-ordinating Activity for Inner City Service Improvement

The assessment of needs and issues in the Inner City point to the need for

- clarification of existing services
- the provision of a range of services given the variety of needs in the community
- a planning/co-ordinating mechanism to review needs, agree on priorities for change and co-ordinate effort where required
- a means of determining and expanding government commitment to policies and action for the Inner City
- a collective means to advocate for the needs of the poor and disadvantaged in the Inner City.

The agencies that currently serve the Inner City undertake these functions to some extent. With limited resources, however, the effectiveness of their efforts is hampered. It is recognized that some improvement in these functions is required, particularly under current economic conditions and increasing competition for limited government resources.

This project has resulted in a list of priority action areas and a plan implementation program. For effective results, a mechanism is needed to ensure that responsibility is assigned, that plans are put in place and that co-ordination and support services are available for implementation. This same mechanism can also take steps to improve the "co-ordinating" functions outlined above without placing pressure on those agencies that have provided much of this support over the years.

Experience in the Inner City has shown that there are already numerous inter-agency mechanisms and consultation processes in place. Practice has shown that meetings and discussion do not consistently produce results. As well, large committees that are formed to involve "everyone" become cumbersome, time consuming and at times do not provide the "equal access" they were meant to provide. Also, there is a tendency for those agencies with managers who take an interest in inter-agency co-ordination to take a lead role in many initiatives, placing high demands on their agency's limited resources. To complicate the efforts of the agencies, many government sponsored efforts require "comprehensive studies" to justify action; these studies result in numerous multi-faceted recommendations that make it difficult for government and agencies to commit themselves to a course of action.

In order to address the need for inter-agency collaboration and the limitations of "committees" and comprehensive studies", it is proposed that the action plan produced through this project be the first phase of a longer term "strategic plan" and that the following mechanism be put in place to ensure implementation and

co-ordination where required. This mechanism should use existing mechanisms or structures where they exist and where there is acceptance to take on additional responsibility.

The components of the proposed mechanism include:

- a "council of agencies" that meets annually to approve (modify) the strategy plan, to monitor needs and progress and to provide a "forum" to discuss new approaches.
 - a "subgrouping of agencies" that would focus on areas that require co-ordination
 - employment, training and education
 - where we live: housing and the community
 - policing, justice and the legal system
 - aboriginal in-migration and settlement support
 - substance abuse
 - "family" support systems for the aboriginal community
 - "appropriate" human/health service support systems (requiring an annual meeting prior to the "council of agencies" meeting to assess needs and new direction).
 - a co-ordinating "working group" of representatives from each of the "subgroups" to meet quarterly to assess emerging needs/ conditions and to determine what if any changes are needed to the action plan.
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- a "co-ordinator" who would provide the administrative and technical support to the "working group", the "subgroups" and the "council of agencies" (paid for through government funding).
 - an information system that keeps the "information" on Inner City services up-to-date.

