# Sheltering Urban Aboriginal Homeless People

## ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AND NEEDS

We really appreciate you coming here and seeing our problems. You say you'll tell it like it is. We believe you. But why is it they want to hear what some professor guy from Ottawa has to say? We've been telling the feds our problems all along. I guess they just don't write any of it down.

Representative of an urban Aboriginal shelter.

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# Foreword by the Author

Housing and Homelessness Branch, of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, commissioned this Report.  The funding came from the National Homelessness Initiative's National Research Programme.  The project was facilitated by the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg.

The data collection and analysis occurred between December 2006 and April 2007.  The Report was finalised after a review and feedback process, involving academic reviewers and a shelter stakeholder committee anchored by the NAFC, lasting though June 2007.  After several months of contemplation, in October 2007, Housing and Homelessness Branch pronounced the Report satisfactory in terms of fulfilment of research contract obligation.  It was then proof-read a final time and one final observation was added: Canada's economic performance in October 2007 is unprecedented, yet there is no reason to think that the problem of homelessness has become any better.  Moreover, this Report took nearly half a year to appear in print, but the situation and issues facing urban Aboriginal homelessness are fundamentally unchanged.  The urgent matters remain urgent.

The full Report will be available for download at the NAFC's website (www.nafc.ca).  A summary of the Report will be posted in both official languages on the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's website (www.homelessness.gc.ca/home/index_e.asp).

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The NAFC, the University of Winnipeg, and especially the stakeholders allowed me full academic freedom to conduct this Study.  I express my sincere thanks to the stakeholder participants who allowed me unfettered access to details of their operations and provided unvarnished commentary on factors for success.   Nonetheless, except where the views of informants, participants, and others are stated, the views expressed in the Report are my own.  The research, conclusions, and recommendations do not necessarily represent the views of the federal government, the NAFC, or the University of Winnipeg.  Note also that this Report was not prepared in connection with the Carleton University School of Social Work where I lecture.

The anonymised statements captured herein might have been said by any of hundreds of front-line workers, administrators, or shelter board members.  Many of the Study's participants will think "I said that" when, in fact, it was a colleague of similar mind.   Some of the quotations are direct if not unsettling.  This reflects the pill without the sugar coating.  The people delivering the services know best what works, what does not, and what should never be tried.  I have raised many points which Aboriginal shelter operators have said for years to officials, who do not seem to write things down or follow things up, probably because the proposed solutions are too far outside the existing policy framework.  Perhaps now, with some of these issues in the open, we will see quicker and more pertinent progress in policy development.

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# *Foreword by the Author*

The stakeholders whom I interviewed hope that their concerns will be debated, in meaningful consultations and in internal discussions, and factor into the 2008 Memorandum to Cabinet on future federal homelessness support.  This process presents a brief but significant window to establish the ongoing, dedicated, properly resourced urban Aboriginal shelter programme called for in this Report.

The officials and others involved in this project appreciate the assistance of the stakeholder informants.  We are particularly grateful for the co-operation and trust, freely given, during the busy Christmas season when service providers face the greatest challenges with their caseloads.

The federal officials, who saw a requirement for a needs assessment of this sort, deserve commendation.  All of the Aboriginal stakeholders in this project would join me in this view.

I have particular gratitude towards Alfred Gay, Policy Analyst at the NAFC, and Dr. Jino Distasio, Director of the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies, for their critical comments and considerable efforts in project administration.  Mr. Gay deserves special thanks for co-ordinating the ad hoc Working Group of stakeholders, meeting the financial accountability reporting requirements, and arranging for the field visits.  Various stakeholder reviewers, some anonymous to me, kindly volunteered to read this Report of approximately 56,000 words.  I have endeavoured to address all their comments, but if any errata remain, I take full responsibility.

Finally, this Report speaks much of policy and financial challenges, but it also describes profound successes and accomplishments on the part of shelter operators, their funding agencies, and their partners in delivery.  These are worth celebrating.


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1 November 2007
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## Background and Methodology

This Study seeks to identify the needs of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters. It was expected that a variety of Federal / Provincial / Territorial (F/P/T) and Aboriginal stakeholders would benefit from a shelter needs assessment which pays particular attention to the challenges of policy, financial resources, financial administrative requirements, demand for services, and a unique caseload which calls for special approaches.

Housing and Homelessness Branch of Human Resources and Social Development Canada commissioned the Study. The project was funded under the National Research Programme of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), now the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg, facilitated the project. The Consultant (the Author) commenced data collection and analysis in December 2006, finishing by April 2007. The Report was finalised after a review and feedback process lasting though October 2007.

The Report is illustrated with photographs of urban Aboriginal shelters with a view towards putting a face' on the issues and dispelling myths. Approximately 200 library and Internet document sources are referenced in the bibliography and endnotes. These cover a range of financial, statistical, and policy issues relevant to the financing of urban Aboriginal shelters. Recommendations are provided.

The Study focuses upon urban Aboriginal shelters whose primary objective is the relief of homelessness as opposed to the relief of flight from violence and abuse. The Study used five case studies, in four cities, to illustrate the diversity and realities of urban Aboriginal shelters. The cities are Prince George, BC; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Brantford, Ontario; and St. John's, Newfoundland. The case Study shelters allowed the Author to conduct interviews with key informants. Interviews were also conducted in Toronto, but the stakeholders there were not treated as case studies. Visits were made to all these locations.

This was not an investigation into the health, social, economic, or other circumstances of Aboriginal populations. It was an exploration of the services available to Aboriginal homeless people in the urban setting; ergo, the various ethical guidelines about the study of Aboriginal populations had limited application. The site visit shelters allowed the Author unfettered access to facilities, staff, statistics, and records of any nature including financial reports not in the public realm. This required ethical assurances that statements by informants would be anonymised and confidential material would be treated sensitively. The documentary and statistical research included a scan of media reports, review of the literature, and targeted research as questions arose. Additional information was obtained through telephone conversations with informants and telephone communications with members of an ad hoc Working Group of shelter representatives struck to advise the NAFC about project.

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## Finding and Analysis

The literature on the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters was found to be slim. Many studies have counted or estimated the number of Aboriginal homeless people in particular cities. Few have considered 'need' in terms of remedy; i.e., number of Aboriginal-designated beds, money required for culturally adapted programming, policy and administrative barriers to lower, etc. The documents closest to shelter needs assessments are the numerous Aboriginal and mainstream shelter proposals submitted for federal NHI funding. Many of these are not available and, when they are, they generally lack rigour. The Report contains a discussion about the availability and veracity of the kinds of data which might be used to assess the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters. The Report also discusses the problem of insufficient co-ordination among the various stakeholders. It notes a lack of strategic vision in federal policy in support of urban Aboriginal shelters. It points out policy gaps and policy contradictions which should be addressed.

The present Study appears to be the first attempt to consider 'needs' in a broad sense. It observes that it is currently impossible to quantify the overall needs of urban Aboriginal shelters in terms of dollars and beds. The main reasons are lack of statistics about met and unmet need, and also, confidentiality issues which hamper access to data. Instead, the Report discusses, mainly using homelessness surveys and demographic studies, the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people among urban homeless populations. The discussion includes socio-economic, cultural, and historical factors which contribute to the size and special needs of this caseload. The Report notes that the number of urban Aboriginal shelter programmes and beds is well below demand.

The Report pays special attention to the unique ways Aboriginal shelters do business, or put another way, what sets them apart and creates additional need for resources and changes in government policy and procedures. The Report categorises these unique Aboriginal approaches to service delivery with a view towards focusing future discussions about specific needs. From discussions with Aboriginal shelter representatives, and from the literature, the Author identifies 28 unique aspects of Aboriginal shelters with varying special cost implications.

The Report contains many often provocative and insightful quotations, mainly from front-line workers in urban Aboriginal shelters, about financial and policy challenges. Among the most disquieting are concerns that many mainstream shelters, particularly those run by churches, are racist and paternalistic in their treatment of Aboriginal homeless clients. Not all are like this, but those that are can have a negative effect on Aboriginal clients mimicking that of the former residential schools. These parallels raise important policy questions at federal level, particularly regarding funding faith-based organisations to deliver shelter services to Aboriginal people.

The Report observes that federal NHI assistance has caused the establishment of a small number urban Aboriginal shelters when hardly any existed before. Most are run by, or affiliated with, Friendship Centres.

These shelters, operating on small and tight budgets, are having positive impacts locally. Besides relieving a portion of the problem of having to sleep on the streets, they are 'reaching' and 'transitioning' Aboriginal clients which mainstream shelters generally cannot. These Aboriginal shelters are a nucleus around which capacity can be grown. However, the federal one-time mode of financing urban Aboriginal shelters has engendered failed projects, and those that survive tend to operate in financial crisis, sometimes having to cannibalise other budgets in order to stay open in hope of a federal bailout. Such a bailout is occurring now, further questioning why the federal homelessness initiative lacks a component to provide ongoing operations funding.

The Report compares the abilities of urban mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to raise money and diversify their funding base away from heavy reliance on federal assistance. It finds that Aboriginal shelters tend to be severely and structurally disadvantaged in ability to diversify their range of funders and generate own-source revenue. The Report observes that, over the six years of the NHI, Aboriginal shelters have generally failed to meet the 'sustainability' targets they set as part of federal funding conditions. Those that have not closed are usually critically reliant on federal funding to survive. Growth is a further challenge that few, so far, overcome.

The Report notes that the federal homelessness initiative has been overly optimistic that non-federal funding agencies would 'step up to the plate' and assist Aboriginal shelters. The Report cites historical F/P/T jurisdictional issues, dating to the 1960s, as reasons why provinces, territories, and municipalities are reluctant. The Report identifies six unique barriers which disadvantage urban Aboriginal shelters seeking funding from non-federal sources.

The findings and recommendations are primarily directed towards the federal officials who will prepare a Memorandum to Cabinet in 2008. This document is expected to map out federal homelessness assistance after the HPS expires on 31 March 2009.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Report makes five general observations related to the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters. These are used to frame the analysis and the recommendations.

**<u>Observation #1</u>: The approaches of shelters for Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, differ fundamentally from mainstream shelters; these differences make Aboriginal shelters more effective than mainstream shelters in assisting Aboriginal clients.**

> <u>Recommendation 1.1</u>: 'Aboriginal' funding for shelters should be divided into two streams: (1) The entire existing 'Aboriginal' envelope should be reserved for the use of Aboriginal organisations

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delivering shelter services to Aboriginal people; (2) A modest proportion of the general envelope should be reserved for non-Aboriginal organisations delivering shelter services to Aboriginal people, and which can demonstrate a genuine and sufficiently large Aboriginal clientele as well as meet the caveats of Recommendation 1.2.

Recommendation 1.1:  'Aboriginal' funding provided to non-Aboriginal shelter providers should have three principal caveats: (1) the provider must have a dedicated Aboriginal homelessness programme to which the funds must be 100% applied; (2) the programme must be designed and supervised by Aboriginal people; (3) the funding should be conditional upon the non-Aboriginal shelter securing a partnership with an Aboriginal organisation with experience in urban programme delivery.

Recommendation 1.2:  Strict reporting requirements, built into the contribution agreement, should provide assurance that none of this Aboriginal-targeted directly or indirectly supports, or defrays the core costs of, these shelters or the charitable organisations that run them.

Recommendation 1.3:  Contribution agreements providing targeted 'Aboriginal' homelessness funding to non-Aboriginal agencies should contain a clause whereby the recipient agrees that, recognising the historic residential schools experience, Aboriginal clients will be provided humanitarian assistance if they do not wish to participate in religious activities or observance.

Recommendation 1.4:  The caveats in Recommendations 1.1 to 1.3 should apply to federal homelessness funding targeted to Aboriginal people, whether funded direct from the federal department or through a designated community.

**Observation #2: Some of the culturally sensitive features, programmes, and services that characterise the core business of Aboriginal shelters require special funding over and above what a mainstream shelter needs for its own core business.**

Recommendation 2.1:  The federal government should distinguish between 'ordinary' common costs, and 'special' urban Aboriginal costs, in the building, equipping, and operating of urban Aboriginal shelters, and provide a rational and adequate basis for funding special costs through a national urban Aboriginal shelter funding model.

Recommendation 2.2:  The national funding model should concentrate on ensuring that adequate funding is available for the delivery of special, extra-cost activities which define the character and success of urban Aboriginal shelters.

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Recommendation 2.3:  Homelessness and Housing Branch of HRSDC should facilitate research to refine the proposed list of unique aspects of Aboriginal shelters, and to consider the cost implications, with a view towards developing a national funding model.

Recommendation 2.4:  Homelessness and Housing Branch of HRSDC should facilitate stakeholder consultations and buy-in in the development of a national funding model.

Recommendation 2.5:  The federal government should, as a matter of clear policy, emphasis the overall importance of transition programming in shelter projects for urban Aboriginal homeless people.

Recommendation 2.6:  Shelters for urban Aboriginal people, which lack an adequate culturally-adapted transition programme, should be financially assisted so they can implement such a programme.

The Report proposes a ten-point 'basic grid' of urban Aboriginal shelter services as a starting point for discussion.

Recommendation 2.7:  Human Resources and Social Development Canada should facilitate research and consultations to develop a concept of 'basic grid of mandated services' in an urban centre, and to explore the policy and funding implications associated with it.

**Observation #3: The National Homelessness Initiative did not acknowledge that the provision of ongoing funding, for urban Aboriginal shelters, is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government; this created conditions contrary to sound management, accountability, and programme impacts.**

Recommendation 3.1:  The Aboriginal components of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy should evolve from a fixed duration 'strategy' to an Aboriginal-specific 'programme' with no sunset date, and which recognises that providing predictable 'sustainability' funding is an appropriate role for the federal government.

Recommendation 3.2:  The federal government should propose intergovernmental agreements specific clarifying to the funding of urban Aboriginal shelters, in conjunction with a permanent federal Aboriginal homelessness programme to assist with core funding and assurances to allay provincial and territorial fears of eventual financial entrapment.

Recommendation 3.3:  Intergovernmental agreements on responsibility for funding urban Aboriginal shelters should clearly not involve transfer of federal administrative or funding responsibilities to provincial, territorial, or municipal levels of government.

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**Observation #4**: **The former National Homelessness Initiative incorrectly assumed a level playing field in the abilities of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to support themselves with funding other from than federal government; yet urban Aboriginal shelters are systemically and significantly disadvantaged in their attempts to obtain non-federal funding, especially to pay for special programme activities designated 'Aboriginal'.**

Recommendation 4.1:  A sound, effective, and accountable basis for future Aboriginal homelessness funding would have three Aboriginal-specific financial pillars: (1) Shelter capital construction and renovation fund with no sunset; (2) Shelter core funding programme with no sunset; and (3) Shelter transition programme fund with no sunset.

Recommendation 4.2:  Direct federal funding of Aboriginal shelters should be through a single funding agreement covering three Aboriginal-specific financial pillars (capital construction and renovation, core operations, and transition services).

Recommendation 4.3:  The single funding agreement should conform to the practice, common in agreements with departments such as INAC, of having a five-year duration at the end of which another agreement might be negotiated.

Recommendation 4.4:  The single funding agreement should follow the practice, originated at INAC, of allowing recipients to manage their priorities by moving money between envelopes, and allow them to carry over unexpended funds at the end of the fiscal year provided these are re-invested in shelter activities.

Recommendation 4.5:  With a view towards accountability, measuring programme impacts, and justifying continued federal investments in urban Aboriginal shelter programmes, the single funding agreement should: (1) Require recipients to use the HIFIS reporting system and submit HIFIS regular reports; (2) Provide financial assistance to offset the staff time required to provide this reporting; and (3) Clarify that the HIFIS information submitted will be publicly available for purposes of accountability, research, and planning.

Recommendation 4.6:  Aboriginal-specific homelessness funding should be accessed through one agency along single-window principles, and delivered through a single funding agreement negotiated with this agency: (1) Consideration should be given to the feasibility of this being an arm's length, apolitical Aboriginal agency with established credibility, competence, and track record; (2) To the maximum extent possible, responsibility for results should be concentrated in this agency; and (3) This agency would be responsible to produce an annual report on Aboriginal homelessness in Canada, which would examine measures of success and failure as experienced by urban Aboriginal shelters.

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<u>Recommendation 4.7</u>:  The federal government should designate and fund an existing Aboriginal organisation to act as a national clearing house on Aboriginal homelessness: (1) This should be an apolitical Aboriginal non-governmental organisation with established credibility, competence, and track record in delivering programmes; (2) This clearing house would foremost be a co-ordinating body responsible to urban Aboriginal homeless shelters, ensuring regular exchange of information and experience, and facilitating quarterly meetings of shelters representatives to discuss developments and best practices; (3) This clearing house would maintain a website with links to stakeholders and partners, downloadable research and policy documents, and bring attention to new developments; (4) This clearing house could undertake research of its own on a project-by-project funded basis, eventually taking over this responsibility from the federal government.

<u>Recommendation 4.8</u>:  Recognising disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in urban homeless populations, the benefits of Aboriginal-designed and delivered shelter programmes, and the greater challenges faced by  Aboriginal shelters in obtaining revenues, the balance of mainstream and Aboriginal-specific shelter funding should be adjusted as follows: (1) A greater expectation of initial and eventual self-sufficiency would be placed on mainstream shelters; (2) The increased expectation would be reflected in growth of the Aboriginal-specific portion of federal homelessness funding; (3) The proportional adjustment would be incremental and annual, at a modest figure of approximately 2%, to avoid fiscal shocks to mainstream shelters and to not outpace the rate at which the system of Aboriginal shelters can realistically expand; and (4) The adjustment would be complete when a target percentage – which must be developed based on further analysis of need – has been met; meanwhile it is recommended that 10% rebalancing over five years be an interim target.

**<u>Observation #5</u>: An emerging political competition for control of urban Aboriginal shelter delivery poses real and significant risk to the present fragile and partial collection of Aboriginal shelter programmes.**

<u>Recommendation 5.1</u>:  The federal homelessness initiative should only fund urban Aboriginal shelters which are explicitly open to all Aboriginal homeless people, while encouraging these shelters to tailor their programming to meet the diverse needs of specific groups within their clienteles.

<u>Recommendation 5.2</u>:  Political, lobby, and governmental organisations should be ineligible for federal urban Aboriginal homelessness funding, excepting instances of urban self-government which may arise from treaty negotiations.

<u>Recommendation 5.3</u>:  The recipients of federal urban Aboriginal homelessness funding should be service delivery organisations, established as societies or charitable institutions, and with governance boards reflecting the diversity of the service population.

# Part 1 - Introduction

## Background

This Study seeks to identify the needs of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters.  It was expected that a variety of Federal / Provincial / Territorial (F/P/T) and Aboriginal stakeholders would benefit from a shelter needs assessment which pays particular attention to the challenges of policy, financial resources, financial administrative requirements, demand for services, and a unique caseload which calls for special approaches.

The Housing and Homelessness Branch of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) commissioned this Report.  Work on this project commenced on 6 December 2006 and finished on 31 March 2007, under funding from the National Research Programme of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).  The National Association of Friendships Centres (NAFC) received funding to undertake the project in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg.  The NAFC had the entire responsibility to co-ordinate the project and to deliver the product according to the contract.  The University of Winnipeg, experienced in homelessness research, acted as a research funding conduit with administrative responsibilities to HRSDC.  The Consultant had full academic freedom to conduct the research and produce the Report.  An *ad hoc* Working Group, of officials connected with the operation of Aboriginal shelters, assisted in the data collection and provided feedback.

This Report makes frequent reference to federal initiatives to assist organisations dealing with homelessness. **Appendix A summarises the evolution of federal homelessness assistance from 1999 to early 2007, and places urban Aboriginal shelters within this evolution.**  Readers unfamiliar with this development, and with the programme terminology common in shelter circles, should read Appendix A.

## Scope of the Project

The scope of this project was determined by what could be accomplished in a landscape of fragmented efforts, paucity of co-ordination, embryonic 'state of the knowledge', and wide differences in the socio-economic and geographic circumstances experienced by stakeholders:

- The Study would be limited by the fragmented nature of effort, and low degree of co-ordination, in the delivery of Aboriginal shelter (and related) services.  This, and the modest and sporadic state of this service delivery, requires the use of case studies in order to frame the context and needs respecting Aboriginal shelters, and to gather information.

- The Study would involve no direct research involving Aboriginal populations.

- The Study would deal with the Territorial North in a limited manner.  This realm was examined in considerable detail in the Author's *Homelessness in the Territorial North: State and Availability of the Knowledge* (2006).

- The Study would concentrate upon the problem of urban Aboriginal *absolute* homelessness and the shelter programmes catering to persons of this condition.  Nonetheless, the Study would recognise that 'hidden' or 'relative' homelessness often creates pressures upon urban Aboriginal shelters.

- The Study would focus upon shelters whose primary objective is the relief of homelessness as opposed to the relief of flight from violence and abuse.  This distinction reflects the fact that a line must be drawn somewhere in order for the research and analysis to be completed with the money and time available.  It also acknowledges that shelters for persons fleeing violence and abuse are highly specialised and deserve separate, sensitive treatment.

  Furthermore, government policies typically, and sometimes imprudently, treat women fleeing abusive relationships as temporarily homeless because they can theoretically return to the domicile they have fled.  Often they do return – sometimes for the wrong reasons and with tragic results – but here for practical reasons we must distinguish between absolute and hidden or relative homelessness.

  Consequently, the Study would exclude urban shelters *specific* to Aboriginal women and their children who are fleeing violence and abuse, while recognising that these victims are sometimes represented in the caseloads of general shelters and transition homes.  However, general-type shelters and shelter programmes for homeless Aboriginal women would be *in*cluded.  This explains why one of the case studies is a transition shelter for homeless Aboriginal women and their children in Saskatoon.

- The Study would focus on the urban shelter context and avoid discussion of reserves except to the extent that people from reserves are a factor in urban caseloads.  This means that the Study would exclude the 'Violence Against Women' shelters which are funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and which exist in about 35 of approximately 640 reserve communities.  The Study would also exclude on-reserve general shelters for homeless people, which are believed to be rare or non-existent, and which would exist in fundamentally different circumstances.

- The Study would consider non-Aboriginal shelters, which provide services to Aboriginal homeless people, only to the extent that they complement or complicate the efforts of urban Aboriginal organisations providing shelter services.

## Methodology

### General Approach

This Report uses five case studies, in four cities, to illustrate the diversity and the realities of urban Aboriginal shelters. The delivery agencies operating these facilities consented to allow the Author to conduct interviews with key informants. They provided free and unfettered access to personnel and documentary records. The Author conducted additional documentary and statistical research as necessary. This consisted of a scan of media reports, a review of the literature, and targeted research as questions arose. Additional information was obtained through telephone conversations with informants and teleconferences with Working Group members.

**Readers wanting more detail on methodology, than contained in this Methodology Section, should consult Appendix B.**

### Data Requirements

The objects of this Report are Aboriginal shelters, which are corporate entities about which one must ask questions of a "programme evaluation" nature. These are questions relating to legal basis, organisation, services offered, business practice, capital and human assets, revenues and expenditures, caseload, overall financial position, indication of performance, and so on.

The necessary written and interview data are along the lines of those applicable in a programme-type needs assessment of the type frequent to social and health administration. Consequently, in order to make conclusions about needs, the Study must develop a sense of the following:

- Historical factors including history of the shelter, organisation, relevant programmes, etc;
- Demand for the services;
- Patterns in caseloads;
- Access and accessibility;
- Clientele, including groups within the overall clientele;
- Trends in social conditions, volume, and cost;
- Capacity of existing shelters;
- Utilisation;
- Services offered and how these compare with non-Aboriginal shelters;
- Identification of partners;

- Role of non-Aboriginal shelters in sheltering the Aboriginal homeless;
- Special characteristics / services / approaches of Aboriginal shelters;
- Geography of Aboriginal homelessness (especially migration trends);
- The fiscal landscape, including existing and potential funding sources;
- Intergovernmental fiscal relations respecting Aboriginal services;
- Questions of F/P/T/A jurisdiction, including licensing;
- Global assessment of funding shortfalls and funding continuity; and
- Overall prognosis.

It was not expected that any of the data obtained from the case study shelters, or other sources, would allow for statistically significant numerical analysis. It was, however, expected that these data would allow for useful descriptive comparisons. This proved to be the case.

## Ethical Considerations

This is *not* a research investigation into the health, social, economic, or other circumstances of Aboriginal populations. It is an exploration of the services available to Aboriginal homeless people in the urban setting. As such, the Study does not involve data collection from the Aboriginal homeless population. The various ethical guidelines about the study of Aboriginal populations are, therefore, of limited application.

The ethical dimension, here, concerns showing respect for the wishes and needs of these organisations about the extent to which details of their operations are discussed in the public realm. The case study organisations allowed the Author "unfettered access" to the facility, staff, statistics, and records of any nature including financial reports not in the public realm. They were assured that the Author would apply his experience and professional judgement about confidentiality.

A few words on the delicacies of "unfettered access" seem in order. First, it was thought that the Report's credibility would be greatly enhanced if the Author could confidently claim that no question was out-of-bounds and no information held by the shelters was off-limits. In that respect, this Study would be a 'first'. Second, initial requests for assistance, from the NAFC and the Author, indicated a hesitance to share data which arguably might somehow be used against the shelter by a funding agency. Shelter representatives were especially reluctant to 'open their books' or speak freely without solid assurances that information would not, as one person stated, "come back to haunt us". None of the agencies wanted to feel that a 'fed' or 'someone from the ministry' was conducting an evaluation. Similar concerns have been expressed in other shelter studies[1] and the subsequent interviews with informants revealed a real basis for these concerns. This is elaborated upon later in this Report. At this point, suffice it to say that these concerns have little to do with perceptions of improprieties or inefficiencies, and much to do with competition between shelters for insufficient and finite resources.

Fortunately, for the purposes of this Study, the level of mutual trust between the NAFC and the vast majority of its constituent Friendship Centres is high.  Protocols exist for these Centres to provide the NAFC with information in order to account for programme funds channelled through the NAFC.  "Unfettered access" was achieved on the basis of this trust, through introductions and endorsements made by NAFC personnel, and through the Author's own record in analysing issues for Aboriginal service delivery organisations.  The price of this access was twofold:

First, statements by shelter representatives would be completely anonymised.

Second, nothing of a non-public nature would be published without permission,
and in the event of uncertainty, the Author would always ask.

The stakeholders were assured that the Author would take an 'auditor approach', rather than a 'reporter approach', towards documents and information provided.  It was made clear that this did not imply any sort of audit or programme evaluation.  It only meant that, like an auditor or programme evaluator, the Author's credibility and experience would sometimes have to substitute for citing specific documents.  The Author has applied this approach in functional investigations of large programmes (e.g., DIAND's[a] social assistance programme, 1995 and 1996; and studies of hospital services and related services utilisation for the Cree Regional Health Board, 2002, 2003).

## Case Studies and Field Research

From the outset, it was realised that the landscape of Aboriginal homeless shelters is characterised by fragmentation of effort and low degree of co-ordination.  This is not a matter of fault or blame.  It simply reflects the fact that Aboriginal shelters, and related services, developed locally in the absence of overall strategy and co-ordination.  This modest and sporadic state of the services required the use of case studies in order to frame the needs in a representative manner.

Taken together, the sites chosen for visits would capture a broadly representative picture of the range of circumstances and challenges experienced by Aboriginal shelter providers.  Four or five site visits were considered sufficient for these purposes.  The sites were selected, in part, to illustrate how issues vary across that country according to such factors as differences in migration patterns, willingness of provincial governments to work with Aboriginal shelters, size of the urban Aboriginal homeless population, and so on.  The selection considered the need to ensure a proper balance between shelters for Aboriginal men, women, families, and youth.

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a :    Officially today still the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), but also known as Indian and Northern Affairs
        Canada (INAC) and simply as "Indian Affairs".

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The schedule of site visits, by city, was as follows:

- Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (December 2006).

  o Infinity House Women's Transition Shelter, a case study.

- Prince George, B.C. (December 2006).

  o Two case study shelters operated by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

- St. Johns, Newfoundland (December 2006).

  o Shanawdithit Shelter operated by St. John's Native Friendship Centre, a case study.

- Toronto and Brantford, Ontario (January 2007).

  o Toronto's Council Fire Out-of-the-Cold Programme was to be a site visit, but this was changed to consultation when it was learned that the project had closed down and Council Fire was seeking a new funding source.

  o Na-Me-Res Native Men's Shelter (and its youth shelter) in Toronto were visited, although time did not permit the lengthy visit and high degree of investigation associated with the other site visits. The interview data were used in this Report, but Na-Me-Res is not one of the case studies.

  o The Toronto office of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) was visited. This is a designated 'community' which distributes federal homelessness funding. Officials of the OFIFC therefore have considerable experience in how recipient organisations experience the programme funding application and accountability requirements. A site visit but not a case study.

  o Brantford Native Housing Corporation, in Brantford, operates a transition shelter for women and children. One of the case studies.

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Appendix C contains a description of the case study shelters.

The Author also took the opportunity of to inspect non-Aboriginal shelters during his visits to these cities.  These 'unofficial' visits, which involved no interviews and no note-taking, helped to ensure that issues put to the Author by Aboriginal shelter informants, about these mainstream shelters as help or hindrance, were seen in proper perspective.

## Key Informant Interviews

Thirty-nine key informants were consulted during the course of this Study.  Detailed interviews, during which all the questions (**Appendix B**) were posed, were held with twenty-seven key informants from the five case studies, and from Na-Me-Res and OFIFC, in five cities.[b]  The above interviews included the manager of each case study shelter and sometimes representatives of the governing board.  Twelve shorter in-person or telephone interviews were held with representatives from the above organisations and from Council Fire.  During these interviews, the informants were asked as many questions from the list as was possible or appropriate.

Additionally, fourteen conversations occurred with clients, either during tours conducted by staff or in common areas (i.e., coffee room or meal room).  In all cases the Author was introduced to the person or approached by the person.  Notes were taken during or soon after these conversations.  Several statements made by these people are quoted in this Report.  This was not the original intent, but their statements carried wisdom and the persons concerned agreed to being quoted anonymously.  These clients were surprisingly insightful and eager for their experiences to be heard – a possible topic for a future research project.

These are additional to seventeen telephone conversations and three teleconferences with representatives of various stakeholder organisations including the Working Group.  Numerous e-mails were exchanged.

## Media Report Scan

A scan of media reports was undertaken with a view towards providing a description of the context of urban Aboriginal shelters.  It was anticipated that this would give a sense of their needs, in so far as these needs have been discussed in the public sphere.  The Author used a similar approach in his *Homelessness in the Territorial North*, bearing in mind the existence of research which shows that media coverage of homelessness in Canada has been rife with inaccuracies and rich in spin.[2]

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b :   Saskatoon - 5; Prince George - 16; St. John's – 2; Brantford 2; Toronto – 2

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An initial scan of media coverage on homelessness made it clear that a more detailed formal analysis of media coverage would not be productive. Unlike the northern coverage, the southern coverage contained few useful illustrations and was highly politicised. Furthermore, given the highly visible community 'media and letter writing campaigns' to have the federal homelessness initiative repeatedly extended and funded at higher levels, the southern coverage on homelessness focussed on the issue of programme extension. This coverage, which began in the closing years of the previous Government and continued until recently, was considered too partisan and selective for a needs assessment project. These reports were also deficient in coverage of aboriginal homelessness. The time and resources that would have been spent on a formal media analysis were therefore re-directed to providing a more in-depth analysis of issues raised by key informants. Nevertheless, the media scan did produce a number of quotations which were used to illustrate specific points, especially ones raised by informants.

### Literature Review

No attempt was made to 're-invent the wheel' by producing an annotated bibliography, in recognition that HRSDC has in its files most of what has been written or compiled on the general topic Aboriginal homelessness, and annotated bibliographies can be found by the public. The Author familiarised himself with the literature on Aboriginal homelessness (i.e., as listed in HRSDC's Das Gupta paper and Distasiso's bibliography) during his Territorial homelessness study. The present project required a further review the literature generally, at the start, and a more targeted literature consultation as the analysis proceeded. The sources used are shown in the endnotes and in the bibliography.

This is, in a word, disappointing.  The Author suspected, from his previous investigation of homelessness in the Territorial North, that the literature on the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters would be slim.  Further search soon demonstrated this supposition to be correct.  No systematic national, regional, or local studies into shelter needs have come to light.  The present Study appears to be the first attempt to consider the overall issue of 'needs'. This is not, however, to suggest that nothing has been written about the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters.  The problem is that documents which discuss the needs of Aboriginal shelters tend to be sketchy, lacking in credibility, or they fail to grasp what is meant by 'need'.

To the programme planner and finance officer, 'need' is about caseloads and unit costs.  It is about the number of clients served versus the number of clients turned away due to lack of capacity.  We know little about this unmet need related to lack of capacity.  Numerous studies estimate the numbers of urban Aboriginal homeless people.  These however say little about the number of beds, and so on, needed to help all those homeless people who would accept help if it were available.  Other studies consider therapeutic techniques and programme approaches best suited to this population.   These say even less about quantity.  Many dozens of proposals for shelter projects argue passionately for funding to address needs.  Yet in all of these kinds of documents, one finds very little about demand in terms of caseloads and costs, met need and unmet need.

The federal homelessness initiative has generated many dozens – possibly hundreds – of funding proposals seeking assistance to establish or continue shelter projects to serve Aboriginal people.  Most of these proposals concern mainstream projects which may, or may not, mention Aboriginal homeless clients.  A smaller number are for Aboriginal-specific projects.  Quite a few of these proposals remain at the level of designated SCPI funding communities. Copies of others are in federal hands, particularly when direct federal funding was requested, and found variously at regional or headquarters level.  There does not seem to be a central repository anywhere.

The data shown in these proposals (when data are in fact shown) show a lack of standardisation and comparability.  Some proposals refer to statistics which may, or may not, be impressive or even convincing. Others discuss need for money indirectly or in terms of generalities.  The proposals tend to lack scientific rigour. They vary in format, length, comprehensiveness, and believability.  This is evident in the fact that some were successful in securing funding while others were not.  It is often difficult to see a clear and consistent link between statistical justifications proposed and decisions to provide federal funding.  Other rationale had to be included in making funding decisions.  To be fair, a nation-wide paucity of shelter statistics - particularly in 1999 when the NHI began – would have severely hampered the majority of proposals if hard statistics were the main funding determinant.

There remains to this day a severe shortage of Aboriginal-specific homelessness caseload statistics at levels higher than the individual shelter.  The root of this problem is arguably an almost complete absence of aggregate, comparable, or reliable Aboriginal homelessness statistics anywhere.  Much of this deficiency can be explained by a deficiency of Aboriginal identifiers and a lack of obligation, on the part of F/P/T governments,

to track caseloads of any sort by ethnic origin.  With a view towards standardisation and sharing of statistics, HRSDC has been promoting the use by shelters of the federal-designed Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) software.[3]  HIFIS permits users (i.e., shelters) to collect information on their homeless clienteles.  It can also generate standard and customised reports.

The HIFIS software serves a variety of purposes including capturing data necessary to justify expenditures on homelessness initiatives on a project-level basis and, collectively, as a federal homelessness envelope.  The ability to capture statistics, which attest to financial need, is a major selling point when a shelter considers the adoption of HIFIS.  Shelters able to produce good statistics ought to be better able to compete for scarce funding – particularly from governments.[4]  Furthermore, an HPS, armed with HIFIS data allowing for programme impacts analysis and better accountability for public funds, stands an improved chance of survival when its budget is under scrutiny in light of other government priorities.

HIFIS has useful features including an ability to capture voluntary Aboriginal identifier information on each client, which is potentially a very useful capacity.[5]  Yet to a researcher seeking to use HIFIS data in describing collective Aboriginal shelters needs, HIFIS is not very helpful.  Recipients of federal homelessness funding are not required to submit HIFIS-standard data on their caseloads.  This submission is optional, as is the use of HIFIS by funding recipients. The HIFIS project is not fully implemented and HIFIS is not the only shelter software in use.  Consequently, the HIFIS data currently in federal hands are geographically sporadic and insufficient for generating useful time-series.  Furthermore, the shelters using HIFIS retain ownership of their data, thus making its release or even internal use problematic.

At present the federal government is unable to provide any of the following types of data of special interest in a shelter needs assessment project:

- Estimate or count of Aboriginal shelters.
- Estimate or count of non-Aboriginal shelters with significant Aboriginal clienteles.
- Estimate or count of non-Aboriginal shelters with Aboriginal programmes.
- Geographic distribution of shelters.
- Any aggregate statistics such as caseload, by province or total.
- Anything on trends, common issues, anything that officials have registered.
- Reasons given for confidentiality concerns, if any.
- Contacts of stakeholders who do not have basic identity confidentiality issues.
- History of funding provided by NHI to Aboriginal shelters and Aboriginal programmes of non-Aboriginal shelters, by region or city as well as aggregate.
- Other non-identifying data relating to urban Aboriginal shelters or sheltering the urban Aboriginal homeless generally.

The Author requested the above information soon after the present project commenced. He was advised by the Department that:

> *I must say that I am very limited in what I can share with you regarding the Aboriginal shelters from the HIFIS Shelter List. In collecting the data from the shelters we have agreed not to share their identifying or specific information. I can share more general information and other possible resource sources that I hope will be of assistance to you.*[6]

These ownership and confidentiality issues explain why the federal government does not publish anonymised, aggregate reports of HIFIS-standard volume data. This is not to suggest that the federal government has much HIFIS data to share or publish. In part because HIFIS and the sharing of HIFIS data are not mandatory as a condition of funding, its adoption by shelters has been gradual and sporadic, and the federal government's HIFIS database is far from complete.

What, then, can we say about the caseloads of urban Aboriginal shelters, about the number of people needing a service and the number of people who can be given a service? The wide adoption of the HIFIS system may, in time, support comparative analyses of urban Aboriginal homeless caseloads by facility, by region, and nationally. Until then the analysis must be generalised. We must proceed based on what we can *infer* about urban Aboriginal homeless caseloads, rather than on what we can *observe* about them.

With one exception[c] the five case study shelters reported routinely operating at maximum capacity and having to turn away more potential clients than can be accommodated even in 'overflow mode'. Representatives of five other Aboriginal shelter organisations, spoken with during this Study, reported similar situations. Turn-aways, referrals to non-Aboriginal shelters, and lengthy wait lists are the norm for urban Aboriginal shelters. Unfortunately, none of the case study shelters was able to provide useful statistics attesting to unmet need. The pressures of coping with their existing clientele make it difficult for them to conduct research of this sort.

Yet growing numbers of turn-aways and referrals, and rising wait lists, are also a fact of life at most mainstream shelters. Increasingly, in order to develop strategic plans, coalitions of urban shelter stakeholders are undertaking research into unmet shelter needs. Readers should note that 'need' in this context is usually seen only as 'number of beds needed', usually with little regard to the higher unit costs associated with special needs groups including Aboriginal people. These mainstream needs assessments are growing in sophistication. They are increasingly looking at trends in people accommodated versus people turned away.[7] These studies typically start with

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c : The exception is Shanawdithit Shelter in St. John's which often operates at only 50% capacity, whose caseload and per diem funding are mainly dependent on referrals from other agencies. The factors driving this caseload are more complicated than numbers of homeless people. The referring agencies, for reasons questionable, often send homeless clients to non-Aboriginal facilities and even hotels. A further complication is that Shanawdithit Shelter is a multi-purpose facility serving medical transients as well as homeless people.

snapshot counts of persons accommodated and turned away over a 24-hour period.  Counting homeless people is difficult.  Counting homeless Aboriginal people is even more difficult.  Nevertheless, it is usually possible to get a sense of the magnitude of this social problem.[d]

The more recent studies, which are beginning to measure homeless people in shelters versus on the street and wanting shelter, are a development of snapshot studies undertaken in many municipalities since the early 1990s.  These recent studies of bed demand usually offer growth scenarios and recommend the number of beds needed at some time in the future.  A recent (2006) report prepared for the Vancouver Shelter Planning Group is a good example.[8]  It is also broadly representative of the caseload trends in mainstream shelters in other large urban centres in Canada.  We shall use the 2006 Vancouver study in order to frame a broad discussion of why Aboriginal people tend to be on the streets in greater proportion than their non-Aboriginal counterparts are.  This discussion will include the main socio-economic, cultural, historical, and other factors which shape the distribution and uniqueness of urban Aboriginal homelessness.  In the course of this, it is necessary to make salient observations about general trends in homelessness in Canada.

**Appendix D contains a more detailed discussion on the demographic characteristic of urban Aboriginal homeless people.**  It contains, among other things, estimates of the Aboriginal homeless populations of various cities.  The present section summarises key points from Appendix D.   Many sources not end-noted the section below are end-noted Appendix D.

Returning to the 2006 Vancouver study: 2,066 people in Vancouver were homeless on 15 March 2005.  On that date there were 936 shelter and safe house beds, leaving a shortfall of 1,130 people without shelter accommodation for the night.[9]   This shortfall may seem alarming, but Vancouver is better equipped than many other cities in terms of shelter beds.

The Vancouver study observes that the average length of stay in emergency accommodation increased in a decade (1993-2004) from about 8 days to almost 16 days, consistent with growth in the count of long-term persons.  A similar pattern tends to appear elsewhere in Canada.

The Vancouver study states that 1,128 emergency beds of all types, including safe houses, existed in Vancouver in 2006.  It estimates that 145 to 1,130 new shelter beds will be needed by 2015.  The worst-case doubling scenario depends less upon growth in the local homeless population - which is expected to remain strong - than upon radical measures to restructure other services in order to relieve pressure upon shelters.  Municipal homeless counts, which double in a decade, are not unusual.  Some have doubled in less than five years.

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d :  **Appendix D discusses methods of counting homeless persons.**  It also reviews some of the more noteworthy of the snapshot counts which include Aboriginal homeless persons.

It is unfortunate that no rigorous bed projection study has yet been undertaken specific to the Aboriginal population of any urban centre, but the mainstream studies increasingly include statistics on the availability of specialised beds per homeless population sub-group.[10]  The 2006 Vancouver study is nevertheless enlightening because it considers numbers of special-needs shelter beds by client group, including Aboriginal.  This study reported an average ratio of shelter and safe house beds, among all population groups, of 0.29 beds per person.  For every three homeless persons there existed on average one bed, or for each homeless person there was one-third of a bed.  This discrepancy would not seem out of place in most other urban centres.

The 2006 Vancouver study also notes that homeless adult men and women, people with mental health problems, and families have access to shelter beds in quantities which meet or exceed the regional average number of beds per homeless person.  The degree of access of these groups to specialised beds, in other municipalities across Canada, varies greatly and is often well under the Vancouver figures.  The Vancouver study does reflect the fact that youth, single adult women, and the elderly are usually significantly under-served across Canada.  Most important, it notes that persons wanting access to Aboriginal-managed services are "very under-served".  The graph below compares these groups in Vancouver.  The Aboriginal figure of 0.05 beds suggests that one in twenty Aboriginal homeless people has access to accommodation in a culturally-adapted shelter run by an Aboriginal organisation.

**Shelter Beds per Homeless Person by Sub-Population Group, Greater Vancouver, 2005.**[11]



| Group | Beds |
| --- | --- |
| Adults | 0.24 |
| Adult women | 0.14 |
| Adult men | 0.29 |
| Aboriginal | 0.05 |
| Youth 16-18 | 0.10 |
| Youth 19-34 | 0.09 |
| Seniors | 0.00 |
| Mental health | 0.24 |
| Families with kids | 1.17 |
| Women/kids seeking transition housing | 1.78 |
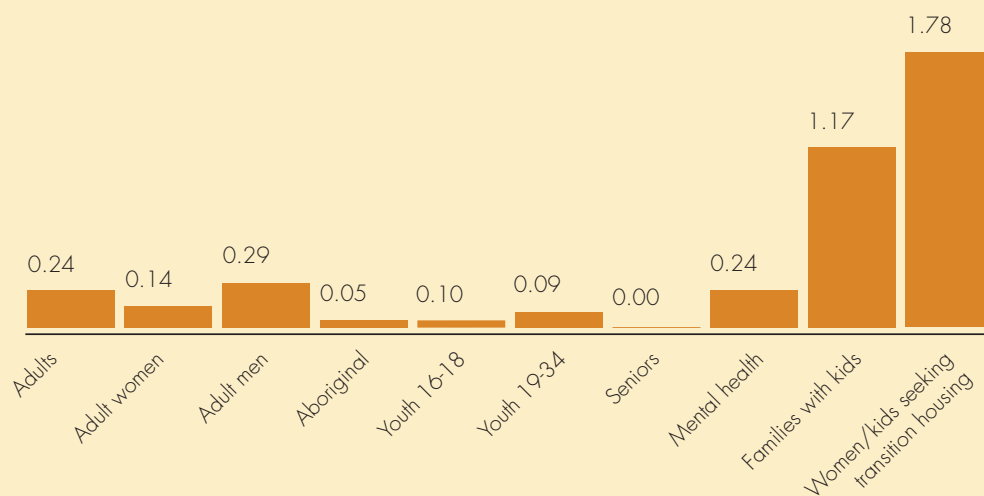
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The Author of the present Report mentioned the one in twenty Vancouver Aboriginal bed ratio to at least one informant from each case study shelter.  All of these respondents considered the figure 'believable' or else 'too low for here'.

The Vancouver study is one of very few that tries to measures unmet need for beds in shelters operated by Aboriginal organisations which, it is correctly assumed, exist in order to provide necessary, culturally-tailored services.  With the possible exception of a few centres with extraordinarily high representation of certain immigrant groups, it is fair to say that few non-Aboriginal homeless people require culturally tailored services.  This (and the merits of Aboriginal-specific shelter services for Aboriginal people) is discussed in considerable length later in the present Report.

This brings us to the number of homeless Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in various cities.  We must first be clear on the distinction between the *absolute* and *hidden* dimensions of homelessness.  Absolute homeless exists when a person has no address, no home, and no shelter except what might be obtained as temporary relief.  Absolute homelessness is the easiest type of homelessness to measure through methods such as surveys, counts, and analysis of shelter caseload statistics.  This ease is relative, however, because homeless is by nature a difficult problem to quantify.  The present Report focuses on absolute homelessness.  Unless otherwise stated, the absolute attribute is implied when homelessness is discussed.

Little other research exists about urban Aboriginal hidden homelessness.  The 2005 'Distasio' study, into urban Aboriginal hidden homeless in the prairie provinces, provides the most revealing examination, so far, of the demographic characteristics.  This found that hidden homelessness in prairie cities is pervasive among the Aboriginal population, yet the relative invisibility of this phenomenon makes it much more difficult to estimate accurately the number of people and to respond with necessary programmes and supports.  But what impact has this on urban Aboriginal shelters?  The report suggested that most respondents had social supports which assisted them in maintaining a roof over their heads, even though they had no shelter options of their own.  "It is this social support network that distinguishes absolute homelessness from hidden homelessness.  Moreover, this social support network 'hides' the problem of Aboriginal hidden homelessness from mainstream Canadian society."[12] One can view this in two ways: the exceptional Aboriginal strengths of family and kinship are perpetuating the social problem of hidden homelessness; or, these strengths are preventing many Aboriginal people from hitting rock bottom and relying totally on emergency shelters.

While we have good estimates of the absolutely homeless populations of various cities (see Appendix D), no study has yet answered the question of how big is the overall homeless population in Canada.  We know that the number of homeless people in Canada has been rising since the 1980s.  In some areas the growth is alarming.  It is abundantly clear that Aboriginal people frequently account for a disproportionate number of the homeless people in urban centres.  This is accepted fact in the trustworthy literature.  This over-representation occurs in most if not all urban centres.  City-specific counts of the homeless often observe this over-representation,

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even though Aboriginal homeless people are particularly hard to count. A credible researcher has estimated that Aboriginal people are over-represented in Canada's overall homeless population by a factor of about ten. While this over-representation varies greatly, it always seems to be elevated, and in many instances it is quite extreme. A decade ago (1996), "Individuals of Aboriginal origin accounted for 35% of the homeless population in Edmonton, 18% in Calgary, 11% in Vancouver, and 5% in Toronto, but only 3.5%, 1.9%, 1.7% and 0.4% of the general population of these cities respectively."[13]

There is good reason to believe that the causes of homelessness Aboriginal Canadians experience the same pressures towards homelessness as non-Aboriginal Canadians. It is also evident that additional pressures are at play. This brings us, first, to the general topic of the demographics of Aboriginal people in Canada. It should be understood that no demographic analysis of Aboriginal homelessness has yet been released, but we can draw many useful inferences from analyses of population growth and migration. The Census indicates that about a million or 3% of Canadians claim Aboriginal ancestry, and that the Aboriginal population cohorts are very significant in the three territories (Yukon 21%, NWT 44%, and Nunavut 75%). The various Aboriginal populations tend to grow quicker than non-Aboriginal populations. Projections suggest that the total Registered Indian population could increase by 34%, from about 703,800 in 2001 to slightly less than 940,000 in 2021. The on-reserve populations continue to grow considerable faster than the growth rate for the general population.

Many imagine that Canada is experiencing a substantial net migration of Aboriginal people, from reserves and remote communities, towards urban centres where they may become homeless. This idea of a net outflow towards municipalities is contradicted by demographic data. Migration is not the main factor affecting urban Aboriginal population growth. The settled Aboriginal populations of urban centres are increasing, by natural growth, faster than the general population. Moreover, substantial migration of Aboriginal people towards rural reserves and rural Aboriginal communities is occurring. This does not suggest that cities are losing their Aboriginal populations to reserves, but it does point to the comparatively high mobility of Aboriginal people.

We know that certain cities, for different reasons, are magnets for Aboriginal people. The cities of the four case study shelters, and Toronto, all qualify as 'magnets'. One informant made the tired joke that Toronto is "the biggest reserve in Ontario". Another from BC made a similar joke about Prince George. Some centres are final destinations for Aboriginal migrants who manage to integrate themselves into the local economy. Others fall into the trap of welfare and possibly homelessness, or they relocate to another centre, or they simply disappear. Vancouver, Toronto, and Edmonton are examples of end-points. Sometimes the flow of Aboriginal migrants is channelled through an intermediate centre. Prince George, the usual stepping-stone to Vancouver, is such a place. This is reflected in Prince George's high transient Aboriginal population and its high Aboriginal homeless count. The two shelters operated by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre try specifically to intercept homeless people before Vancouver.

So far, we have discussed urban Aboriginal homeless people as numbers but they are not a homogenous population.  Aboriginal people in Canada tend to have a significantly lower quality of life generally, and urban Aboriginal homeless people lower than this average.[14]

Urban Aboriginal homeless people represent different cultural groups and may speak languages other than English or French.  Their life experiences are different in fundamental ways.  Many carry the inter-generational scars of the old Indian Policy and the residential schools system.  Many of these people were born into poverty and have known nothing but poverty.  They are particularly disadvantaged in terms of level of education attained.  Their cultural social connections and spirituality generally differ markedly from the mainstream.  They are disproportionately beset by serious and chronic medical conditions.  They are, by nature of their ethnicity and history, prone to experiencing discrimination.  This includes discrimination in obtaining and keeping social and rental housing.[15]

A 2002 survey of homeless people in Calgary supports the claims of Aboriginal organisations that urban Aboriginal homeless people tend to have unique backgrounds, which require special measures in order to have a fair chance at re-integrating these people into the socio-economic fabric of society.  Of the Aboriginal absolute homeless cohort, 21.5% had attended residential school, 20.6% had parents who attended residential school, 77% had been in jail, 37.9% had experienced problems with child welfare authorities, 22.3% were adopted, and 28.4% were at some point otherwise institutionalised.

## Approach to the Analysis

The findings and analysis are structured around five observations as follows:

Observation #1: The approaches of shelters for Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, differ fundamentally from mainstream shelters; these differences make Aboriginal shelters more effective than mainstream shelters in assisting Aboriginal clients.

Observation #2: Some of the culturally sensitive features, programmes, and services that characterise the core business of Aboriginal shelters require special funding over and above what a mainstream shelter needs for its own core business.

Observation #3: The National Homelessness Initiative did not acknowledge that the provision of ongoing funding, for urban Aboriginal shelters, is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government; this created conditions contrary to sound management, accountability, and programme impacts.

Observation #4: The former National Homelessness Initiative incorrectly assumed a level playing field in the abilities of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to support themselves with funding other from than federal government; yet urban Aboriginal shelters are systemically and significantly disadvantaged in their attempts to obtain non-federal funding, especially to pay for special programme activities designated 'Aboriginal'.

Observation #5: An emerging political competition for control of urban Aboriginal shelter delivery poses real and significant risk to the present fragile and partial collection of Aboriginal shelter programmes.

**Observation #1: The approaches of shelters for Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, differ fundamentally from mainstream shelters; these differences make Aboriginal shelters more effective than mainstream shelters in assisting Aboriginal clients.**

## Aboriginal Homeless People and Mainstream Shelters

The vast majority of urban Aboriginal homeless people, who make use of shelters, receive their shelter accommodation from non-Aboriginal agencies. It would be difficult to find a director of any Canadian homeless shelter who disputes this as fact. The reasons are simple: first, Aboriginal people tend to be over-represented among urban homeless populations; and second, relatively few Aboriginal shelters and designated Aboriginal shelter beds are known to exist.

The Aboriginal shelters consulted in the present Study are realistic about this 'bed imbalance'. They want to see more Aboriginal-run shelters, but they are under no illusions about the feasibility of establishing Aboriginal shelters in every locality with sufficient Aboriginal clientele. Their paramount concern is that any shelter assisting Aboriginal people should display an appropriate culture-sensitive approach. This inability of mainstream shelters to relate to Aboriginal clients varies. In extreme cases it translates into treatment which, while with the best of intent, is psychologically and culturally destructive. All of the informants in the present Study had strong concerns over the psychosocial consequences of Aboriginal over-representation in insufficiently sensitive mainstream shelters.

Before contrasting Aboriginal and mainstream shelters, it is prudent to reflect on the perception of urban Aboriginal homeless people about whether the mainstream 'system' is out to help them or hinder them. Informants suggested:

> *Our people have an oral tradition. We pass on stories, events, for generations and the courts say we tell the stories accurately. Our homeless people pass on new too, oh yes, you wouldn't believe. Our hard-core street people, especially, they talk and remember every time a homeless Native got his face smashed into the hood of a police car. They can read too.*

> *Lots are scared of authority, official people. They know the names of homeless people that've disappeared or died in police cars and jails, dead in snow banks run out of town. They know the details. They have a pretty good reason to see government and agency people as out to get them.*

*They're not paranoid. What you see on the news about oppressed homeless people is the tip of the iceberg. If you were them would you trust anyone connected with the system? That's why we can reach them, but don't think it's easy even for us. It usually takes time.*

*Maybe you'd remember some of these horror stories in the news. Most people wouldn't because it's not special. Another dead homeless guy – It's over 500 since somebody started counting a few years ago. Imagine how this stuff scares our homeless brothers and sisters.*

Media reports – which homeless Aboriginal people read - convey and probably promote a sense of this mistrust by Aboriginal homeless people of mainstream institutions. Consider the following example from 2006:

RCMP will be asked to take over a probe into allegations that Edmonton police rounded up homeless people in a van, held them for hours and then dropped them off far away from where they were picked up…Nine homeless people, many of whom are aboriginal, were allegedly picked up by police in a van on May 20, 2005, held against their will for two hours in overheated conditions, and then dumped off in a northside neighbourhood. The chief's announcement came one day after aboriginal leaders demanded an independent inquiry into the allegations.

The leaders linked the incident to a long history of complaints of police misconduct involving aboriginals. The incident has drawn comparisons to the "starlight tours" the aboriginal community in Saskatoon accused their local police force of conducting. They first came to the public's attention in 2000 when an aboriginal man named Darrell Night came forward to accuse police of abandoning him on Saskatoon's outskirts on a frigid winter night. He survived by making his way to a nearby power station. The case triggered one of the largest RCMP investigations in Saskatchewan history with a task force that looked into several cases of men who froze to death in and around the city.

Two Saskatoon police officers were fired after it was determined 17-year-old Neil Stonechild was last seen alive while in police custody on a cold night in 1990. Days later his frozen body was found in an industrial area. Boyd said that Edmonton police officers enforce the law based on how people behave, nothing else. "It is about addressing the conduct, not responding to the status or the race of the individual," he said.[16]

Besides the systemic discrimination that exists, to varying degrees, in official institutions, we must consider the discrimination and insensitivity that exists in mainstream shelters. With such discrimination in mind, the informants in this Study tended to see two rationales for Aboriginal-sensitive shelter services: (1) discrimination is a systemic feature of mainstream shelters; and (2) only *bona fide* Aboriginal shelter programmes are able to connect properly with Aboriginal clients. Let us first consider the manner in which mainstream shelters often fail their Aboriginal clients by being insufficiently culturally understanding and adaptive.

In order to do this we must put 'mission' shelters in context. The informants in this Study tended to have strong opinions about those mainstream shelters which require religious observance as a condition of assistance, or in which the goal of 'salvation' is promoted in a less overt manner. The word 'mission' often conjures up negative feelings among the operators and clients of Aboriginal shelters. Most Aboriginal people probably associate the word 'mission' first and foremost with the church outposts which, from the early Post-Contact period, sought to convert Natives into Christians and sought to promote White values. The word 'mission' is also inexorably linked with the former residential schools system. It would be unrealistic to think that historical associations like these do not stain the relationship between Aboriginal homeless people and church-run shelters.

This does not imply that all the services provided to Aboriginal clients by church-run shelters are negative. Some churches do not attempt to connect religion with assistance, although all would provide religious guidance if requested. This bespeaks the fact that not all churches consider themselves on a mission to save the homeless; some are in the shelter business in order to do some social good. Thus, not every church-operated shelter is run as a 'mission'.

In some cases, Aboriginal homeless people have appreciated the religious guidance required or offered, for the churches vary greatly in their cross-cultural sensitivity and proselytising agenda. Indeed, at least one Aboriginal-run shelter has been associated with a church, and at least one church-operated shelter takes special measures to respect its Aboriginal clientele. It would be hard to find an Aboriginal shelter official who berates everyone connected with the operation of church-run shelters. Their good intent is seldom if ever questioned. What *is* questioned, however, is the ability of these shelters to understand and relate to their Aboriginal clientele:

> *You can't work in this business unless you care about homeless people. You've got to have a heart. People running the missions have a heart too. It's just sometimes in the wrong place. They think they know best, and they don't really.*

The clearest indication that a mainstream shelter is unsuitable for Aboriginal people is when Aboriginal people refuse to go there even when they have no other place to sleep. The reasons for this unsuitability, as explained to the Author, include honest inability to understand the culture and experiences of Aboriginal peoples, outright racism, and similarity of mainstream shelters to the residential schools. A director of an Aboriginal shelter encapsulated the fundamental difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelter workers:

> *You meet some people that work at the shelters, they read the paper about rez schools and try hard to understand, but they just can't. They're not Indian.*

Cultural insensitivity can also have its roots in bureaucracy:

*The other shelters have policies against discrimination, so they treat everybody just the same. Sometimes their lawyers say this is what to do.*

*I can see their point sometimes. In the cities it's not just White people and Native people anymore in the shelters. There's Somalis, Arabs, Chinese, you name it. Sometimes they don't speak English. I've been told "We don't have resources to tailor things the way we'd like. All we can afford is some kind of median."*

The Author heard many complaints about racism at mainstream shelters. The more serious concerns were about shelters where relief is conditional upon acquiescence to church doctrine. Some Christian shelters offer assistance with no strings attached. An informant said of these shelters:

*They do lots of good. We respect them, we have a good relationship with them. I don't hesitate referring someone there. Our clients don't have anything bad to say about them.*

Yet mainstream shelters, church-operated or not, can be quite out of touch with Aboriginal homeless people:

*Some Native people refuse to go to the mission because they're too racist there.*

*If it's not an Aboriginal org that runs the shelter, clients just won't go there. I've seen it myself in Fort Frances, Toronto, Sudbury.*

*I have seen people refusing to use a service, like in Sudbury, because all that went there were non-Native people. They will stop going to a non-Native soup kitchen when their buddies aren't there. It's almost like, at street level, they communicate to boycott a service…hard-core street people have a voice too. They're like a hidden voice.*

*They don't want religion forced on them, especially some brand of Christianity. Lots of Native homeless people are Christian but in a Native way. Those that want spirituality usually prefer smudges, sweats, just somebody to talk to that respects their beliefs or helps them regain them. We respect whatever you are and try to get you reconnected to your history and your community's ways. We don't try to convert you.*

*These missions really think you can put a hungry Native in a church full of non-Natives, rant on about God and Jesus, and the Native's gonna break down crying and say "O Lord! I've seen the light!" Any time that's happened I'm sure the guy's having them on.*

*This racism in out-of-the-cold church groups, that open every winter, is serious.*

One informant became visibly upset when discussing the attitudes of particular mainstream mission shelters towards homeless Native men:

*They are just racist. They have zero respect for down-and-out Natives. They treat Native clients differently, it's paternalism. They have no idea what out people have been through, what we carry. My clients tell me those shelters treat them like Red Injuns. It's like back in the days of Clifford Sifton and the rez schools. Just pray to God and you can be a White Man too.*

An unidentified person – possibly a client - overhearing an interview with a staff informant, remarked:

*You always need to be on guard. They want to f--- with your head and there's no sense of respect…*

*They don't respect anybody that hasn't seen God and got reborn again. Until then, you're totally misguided and just a little kid. Natives like us are like retarded kids. Yeah, redskin kiddies, the devil's in us. There's a word for this, these kids, can't remember.*

The Author ventured "wards of the Crown?" and the person responded:

*Yeah! Right. I mean, these missions are frozen in time, like there's still Indian agents…*

*'Paternalism'? How 'bout this. If there's TV they'll change the channel to something 'wholesome'. Wanna get them going, get a lecture? Start watching something with skin. I saw the TV shut off cos' guys were watching women doing exercise. We got the guy all wound up. Wouldn't happen here, I mean, we got respect for the staff here.*

A 2005 study of Aboriginal homelessness in Ottawa asked the question "why some agencies are not used". Their responses add to the sentiments expressed by informants in the present Study:

*Respondents were asked if there were any agencies or services that they did not use for one reason or another, and if so, why not. Almost all respondents could name places they had used but would not use again. In some cases the reasons were personal (conflicts with other clients, being evicted for fighting, cultural differences with other clients, lack of cleanliness of other clients), other times it was related to location (i.e., Odawa and The Well are too far away). In a few cases it was lack of awareness about what other agencies had to offer. A few of the men cited strict rules against the use of alcohol as the reason they did not access the Salvation Army.*

For almost all of the women and a few of the men the fact that most other clients were non-native or a perception that the agency did not understand their culture kept them away from several agencies such as The Mission, YMCA, Oasis, St. Joe's, Centre 507, and St. Lukes.  One respondent who was gay did not feel comfortable with the services offered by Pink Triangle because he felt the services were more for non-natives.

Cultural differences with other clients may be an issue for some Aboriginal women, particularly at Cornerstone/LePilier.  Two respondents reported that excessive arguing and fighting amongst clients from different cultural backgrounds was the main reason why they did not go back to Cornerstone.  The opinions of the two teen respondents differed somewhat.  The young woman said she would not use the Mission again because she didn't like the food there – "they always have cold ham".  The young man mentioned two agencies that he would not use again – Centre 454 because he felt this was for older people and not teens, and Shepherds of Good hope because he felt it was the "roughest place" he had used.[17]

Wanting to be respectful, the operators of Aboriginal shelters are usually diplomatic about what may be serious misgivings about particular church-run shelters.  Aboriginal shelters can nevertheless be clear on an official level about how their approach fundamentally differs.  For instance, the Prince George Native Friendship Centre makes the following policy statement about its Ketso Yo Centre Men's Hostel:

Consistent with the philosophy of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre, the Ketso Yoh Centre is operated in a manner that respects the individual's human rights.  Fundamental to this is the right of the resident to practice his culture and religion in an atmosphere free from threat - it being our philosophy that understanding one's cultural heritage is requisite if one is to develop as a person to his full potential.[18]

The informant interviews show that people connected with Aboriginal shelters tend to have strong views about the propriety of federal contributions to mainstream shelters whose operations and goals mimic the residential schools:

*When you're seeing these guys in Ottawa, tell them they give Aboriginal homeless money to residential schools.  These missions ARE residential schools.  How can the government apologise [over residential schools] and give money to convert and civilise Indians?  It makes me sick that my taxes pay missions to deny food to First Nation people that don't attend mass and pray.*

*Don't the feds know the damage they're doing? This is hypocritical.  Haven't they learned anything?*

Informants voiced concern that some mainstream shelters see Aboriginal clients primarily as a source of funding; in particular, they have used the Aboriginal funding stream of the NHI not as a way to offer Aboriginal-sensitive services but for other purposes.  Specific examples were given.  The ability of mainstream shelters to use 'Aboriginal' funding for non-Aboriginal purposes is generally seen as a fundamental accountability flaw within the federal homelessness initiative:

> *They take the money and nothing changes.  There's no Aboriginal programme, there's nothing. They [a faith-based mainstream shelter] said 'Look!  We have an Aboriginal cook!'  Well what did he cook differently?*

> *There's no accountability.  The feds pass out Aboriginal money with no strings attached. We have a real problem with that.  It's our programme money down the drain.*

> *This isn't just about UAS dollars.  Some write proposals about all their Aboriginal clients and they get SCPI dollars from the community that does distributing for Ottawa.  I don't see them doing much except taking other money that's got 'Aboriginal' on it.  The feds don't care.*

I've seen [a church] suddenly do big renovations right after they got federal Aboriginal dollars.  They didn't fix up the shelter, no, they renovated the church.  Nothing's changed in the shelter.

A senior representative, of an Aboriginal organisation that operates a shelter, complained emphatically about mainstream shelters which cultivate good relations with Aboriginal shelters so that they can access 'Aboriginal' shelter funding:

> *I thought we had a good relationship.  Then one day they apply for Aboriginal homeless money with me as a reference.  I called him up and said you never had consent, this is not ethical. Well he didn't like that, but nothing changed.  They just want to dip in the Aboriginal pot.*

## What Makes an Aboriginal Shelter "Aboriginal"?

One informant summed up the common perspective of all of this Study's informants:

> *What makes us different?  You need to be able to understand why people are in these circumstances. You need to know what it's like to be an Indian.*

The Author asked informants the question: "What's different about shelters run by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people?"  In every case, the informant began with a statement about theoretical or philosophical

approach.  This contained general statements about key concepts such as spirituality, medicine wheel, tradition, healing, respect, culture, wellness, and holistic.

These valid observations were expected.  At this point the Author stopped the informant, saying words to the effect of: "*I* understand this, but these words go right over the heads of the people in the ivory towers.  They need to know what you actually do that's different, not just your approach.  Specific, tangible things anybody can see, touch, understand."  This focused the discussion on a more concrete description of the defining features of Aboriginal-sensitive shelter programming.  Let us now consider these elements as conveyed by informants.

The first requirement for an 'Aboriginal shelter programme' is Aboriginal control and Aboriginal staff.  This may seem obvious, but most informants voiced disapproval of certain mainstream shelters receiving 'Aboriginal' funding yet offering no credible Aboriginal programme, or none at all:

> *It's not good enough unless the programme is designed and run by an independent committee of Aboriginal people.  A couple of token Indians on an advisory committee isn't enough.  If they're serious, these places should give planning and operations to Aboriginal people that aren't on their payroll.  Then you'll see results.*

All Aboriginal shelters have a policy of treating their clients with respect.  Their workers are required to treat clients much more respectfully than one expects of the average counterpart worker in a mainstream shelter.  This is policy to remove stigma and establish conditions whereby the client can be 'reached'.  This is diametrically opposite to the attempts of many shelters to 'convert' their clients:

> *The stigma of being Native lessens the moment you walk into any Aboriginal shelter I know of.  Same as a Friendship Centre.  There's a sense of home and community.*

> *You're with friends.  We don't have plans for you.  There's no agenda.  We're there when you're comfortable enough to want help.*

Visitors to Aboriginal shelter programmes find that the effect of this approach is palpable.  The Author was especially struck by the attitudes of staff and clients in the two large Aboriginal men's emergency shelters that he visited: Ketso Yoh in Prince George (a case study) and Na-me-res in Toronto.  Both have a high proportion of 'hard-core' street people among their clienteles.  Persons in this situation, Aboriginal or not, are widely considered the most challenging to accommodate and to deal with.  This difference is illustrated by this example. At Ketso Yoh a resident was observed coming into the shelter and asking for something to do.  He asked if he could mop the floor.  This was in addition to his having completed his assigned chores earlier that day.  He

asked for nothing in return.  He mopped the main hallways for an hour until they were finished.  The Author struck up a conversation.  The man said "I wouldn't do this anywhere else, just do what I have to.  I tell new guys, show respect, everybody here's family, him too" [pointing to the staff member at the check-in point].

A shelter worker explained that:

> Most shelters just say 'take a number', take a shower and sleep on that mat, then get outta here at eight in the morning.  We learn your name.  We won't just turf you out at minus 20 when you're shaking and coughing up.

Aboriginal overnight shelters tend to be very hesitant to send their clients out onto the streets during the day. Mainstream shelters typically require residents to leave excepting the ones who agree to stay for counselling or prayer.  The choice is typically 'join our programme' or 'out you go'.  Aboriginal shelters make special efforts to ensure their clients have a safe 'hang out' place where they can interact, or just sleep on a couch, away from the negative influences of the street and where the client is more likely to become to become open to discussing lifestyle changes.  Consider the case of Ketso Yoh.  This shelter is very flexible about the use of its lounge during the day.  Clients behaving responsibly – apparently most of them – can watch television, talk, or play a game.

A smaller hang-out room is maintained at the Friendship Centre which runs Ketso Yoh.  An impressive wall mural dominates the room.  This conveys the incompatibility between alcohol and traditional First Nations values. Homeless people come here to stay warm and just socialise.  Coffee, tea, sandwiches, bannock, and other simple fare are available most of the time.  This room is not just for homeless people to hang out: the homeless people who use it meet other people, such as elders and social services workers, who are willing to help.  Low-income people, especially persons having to visit the Friendship Centre's food bank or clothing bank, can also warm up and have refreshments here.

While remaining mindful of the minimum worker-client distance necessary to maintain order, Aboriginal shelters emphasise brotherhood and sisterhood bonds between worker and client:

> We've been there ourselves, or we've watched family and friends go through the same things.  All our families have been touched by the problems they face.  We're not just some ministeror social worker that want's to do good.

> We're extended family.  Sometimes we're brother and sister.  I mean we have the same mother or foster mom.

> It's your home.  You want to punch out the drywall?  Fine.  But you'll fix it tomorrow for your brothers.  And you know what?  They will.  Sometimes they'll go around to their brothers and apologise.  That's all on their own.

Aboriginal shelters are vigilant about not doing things in ways that their clients could associate with the residential schools.  This is because much of their older clientele has been to residential school, and many of the younger clients have grown up in households made dysfunctional by the residential schools experience of their parents.

Informants reported that mainstream shelters replicate the residential schools effect through architecture, discipline, attitude of the workers, and requirements that clients pray in order to be fed and housed.  They state that these parallels can be obvious.  When these parallels are not psychologically destructive, they are impediments to conditions under which meaningful communications – much less transition - is possible.  Informants from Aboriginal shelters described many small changes their shelter had made, in the way it does business, in order to reduce such barriers.  These changes are usually very low-cost owing to scarcity of funding.  Aboriginal shelters have to make do with unsuitable facilities available to them.  The Na-me-res men's Native men's shelter operates Tumivut youth shelter.  Na-me-res is urgently seeking funding to rebuild Tumivut from a dormitory style residence - with residential schools architectural imagery – into a less institutional format with individual rooms.

Some informants stated that mainstream shelters tend to be more rigid in their administrative rules.  One remarked that Native clients "just don't want those frameworks or curfews or specific house rules".  This view is widely held in Aboriginal shelters.  An informant, asked what distinguished these rules from those of other shelters, replied:

> There's only one rule: mutual respect.  The details come from this one rule. We show them respect. We don't need a hundred rules when "respect your sisters" covers it most of it.  They'll show common sense when they get a chance.  They'll never move forward when their only choices in life are based on 'do this and we'll do this back.'

It would be wrong to conclude that Aboriginal shelters lack rules.  Each has written administrative policies.  Each posts its basic house rules for clients to read.  These house rules are explained verbally when necessary.  The principal difference, then, is not the rules but the way in which Aboriginal shelters prefer respect over discipline as the preferred way to ensure harmony and order:

> We're less proscriptive and more flexible, but we always balance discretion with safety.

> We encourage positive behaviour.  The other shelters punish negative behaviour.  We can be strict too, but that's not our starting point.

> We emphasise a relaxed setting rather than no-this, no-that.  We have rules like no opposite sex visitors after hours but we don't lecture everybody all the time.  Treat clients like children and they won't respect you, and you'll never make a difference.

Yet Aboriginal shelters can be firm when necessary:

*We call the police when somebody gets threatening or violent.  But you know, we see less a lot less flashing lights than the competition, almost none.  Give people respect and they give it back.*

*We don't accept anybody in a programme that doesn't sign a contract that they'll participate willingly.  It's all optional.  This contract isn't just them signing.  It's a two-way street and that sets us apart from the other places.*

**Observation #2: Some of the culturally sensitive features, programmes, and services that characterise the core business of Aboriginal shelters require special funding over and above what a mainstream shelter needs for its own core business.**

### Beyond Stereotypes: Visualising Aboriginal Shelters

The images on the following pages convey a sense of how greatly Aboriginal shelters vary in function and appearance.  If nothing else, these images will convey uniqueness and an omnipresent feeling of 'Aboriginality'.  Much of the visual uniqueness in the shelters visited is the result of donated articles and volunteer labour.  Often the volunteers are the residents themselves.  The residents, having a greater sense of family and community, are more likely to help maintain or improve the shelter than their counterparts in mainstream shelters.  Yet these appearance differences are seldom entirely free; it usually takes additional effort to finance even the smallest visual distinctness.  Furthermore, behind these images are supplemental costs invisible to the eye: programming, counselling, access appliances, and so on.

Infinity House women's transition shelter in Saskatoon. A 16-suite apartment building (one suite is used as an office) in an average residential district. This is a no-frills operation with 24-hour supervision. Infinity House strives to look and feel like any other modest rental building. Strong efforts are made to ombine a collective family atmosphere with a sense of normal family life. This is especially important for the children of resident mothers, who may be especially affected by stigma.

Infinity House women's transition shelter in Saskatoon.  Resident lounge with staff member.  This is one of the apartment units in the building, reserved for use as a lounge for residents and a place for counselling and cultural activities.  Christmas decorations and furnishings are almost all donated



Infinity House women's transition shelter in Saskatoon.  Resident lounge with kitchen behind pillar.  Staff and elders use this area to teach resident mothers about parenting skills that most Canadians take for granted (e.g., infant care, cooking) but which Aboriginal people often lack due to the intergenerational effects of the residential schools.

Infinity House women's transition shelter in Saskatoon.  The apartment unit used for administration, showing two staff members in the former living room.  Now a cramped but welcoming lounge for staff discussions and for client drop-in.  To the left, the kitchen is used as an office with one computer.  Under the tree are gift baskets for residents, assembled by staff from donated items.



Shanawdithit Shelter, St. John's Newfoundland.  Dining room for residents with kitchen beyond.  This shelter is mainly persons experiencing temporary or regular homelessness, but also transients who are in St. John's for medical diagnosis and treatment.  The Friendship Centre running this shelter has decorated this and other common rooms with Aboriginal photos and posters, but apart from that, insufficient funding has meant that this facility has almost no dedicated, culturally adapted programming other than what the adjoining Friendship Centre's overworked employment counsellor is able to provide.

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Shanawdithit Shelter, St. John's Newfoundland.  Inside a typical room.  This is as good as it gets in terms of comfort level and amenities in a shelter, but note that this is necessary because some of the clients are medical transients.  Generous federal funding built this facility, but funding has not been available to put in place any Aboriginal programming.  The facility is in an arrested state of development and constantly on the brink of financial collapse.



Shanawdithit Shelter, St. John's Newfoundland.  Resident's lounge.  A comfort level approaching that of a modest hotel, although the ready availability of capital funding versus operations funding have meant that the Aboriginal aspects of the facility are limited to staff and minimal decoration; the culturally-specific programming is notably lacking although the place has a very welcoming and understanding staff.

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Shanawdithit Shelter, St. John's Newfoundland



Ketsoh Yoh Shelter, Prince George B.C.

*These photos, taken in December 2006, reinforce the climatic necessity of shelters in Canada.*

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Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Wall mural dominating a room where homeless people, low income people, other clients, and staff and elders can mingle.  This is also a daytime out-of-the-cold room where homeless people can find tea, coffee, sandwiches etc.  The message behind this mural is abundantly clear.  Art such as this is common at Aboriginal shelters and associated programmes, and with few exceptions it is donated or produced by the clients.



Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Common area and kitchen of the Reconnect Programme Aboriginal youth shelter.  This is operated under contract to the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).  It provides a safe, secure, stable and nurturing emergency drop-in shelter services and daily integrated service programming to street involved and/or high risk youth.  This includes shelter, drop-in, lunch and dinner, positive role modelling.

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Resident's room in Ketso Yoh men's shelter.  A few residents, such as this longer-term resident, have rooms of their own.  Shelter staff asked this resident to show the Author his room, which he proudly did.  This illustrates the flexibility of Aboriginal shelters.  A mainstream shelter would not tolerate this clutter, but the carvings this resident makes earn extra money, build his self-esteem, and develop his ability to live independently.



Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Kitchen in Ketso Yoh men's shelter.  Typically clean and very basic, geared towards producing hundreds of meals daily with whatever ingredients are at hand.  Despite this limitation, the menu is reasonably nutritionally sound and appealing, and efforts are made to accommodate special needs.  Note paintings on the door facing the residents' lounge.  All Aboriginal shelters reinforce this message of "Respect" through visual cues and humane treatment.

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Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C. Stairwell thoughtfully and strikingly finished using donated materials and with the free labour of the residents themselves.

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C. This room in the large Friendship Centre complex contains donated second-hand clothing, toys, and infant aids for shelter residents and low-income people in need. Other rooms include adult clothing storage, food bank, out-of-the-cold drop-in room, and dental clinic. No other Aboriginal shelter comes close to enjoying this economy of scale or even some of these services.

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Spartan overflow bunk room in Ketso Yoh men's shelter.  Claustrophobic, borderline hygienic, and deficient in ventilation, but much better than nothing.  This shelter occupies a run-down hotel.  Like other Aboriginal shelters the first priority is survival.  The second priority is helping clients make the transition to wellness and self-support; luxuries are out of the question.
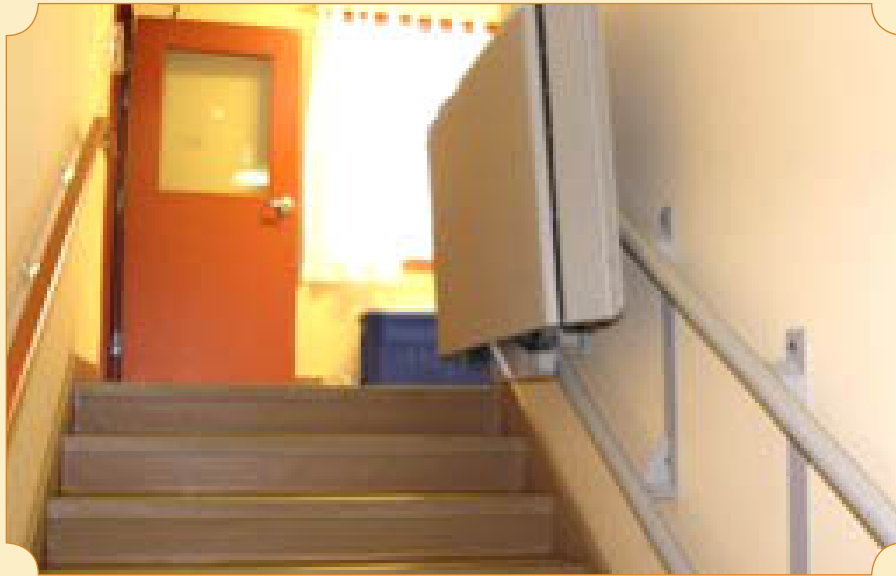
Shanawdithit Shelter, St. John's Newfoundland.  One of the few Aboriginal shelters to have special access features (e.g., chair-lift shown here). The clientele of Aboriginal shelters, like Aboriginal people generally, are disproportionately beset by chronic maladies ranging from foetal alcohol syndrome to diabetes complications.  Mobility impairments are common and special arrangements often have to be made for medical supervision.



Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George, B.C.  Dental clinic financed by donations and operated by volunteer dentists – a remarkable achievement.  Deplorable dental health is characteristic of homeless people.  Much of the activity of this no-frills part-time operation is tooth extractions, crisis stabilisation, and pain relief.  Readers may be surprised that homeless Métis and non-Status Indians do not enjoy free dentals benefits under Health Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Programme.  Children in homeless families are especially affected by caregiver inability to pay impossible dental fees.  (Some provinces like Quebec provide minimal dental assistance for children in these circumstances.)

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## Unique Aspects of Aboriginal Shelters

Recent years have seen considerable debate and research into what balance of services constitutes the most effective response to urban homelessness. It is now an established principle that shelters are merely one service on a continuum of preventative and remedial supports delivered by governmental, non-governmental, charitable, and private agencies. The debate on the continuum of responses is now international, vigorous, and sophisticated. It is characterised by a high degree of disagreement over the best approaches. This lack of consensus reflects a clash of technical, political-philosophical, and religious perspectives.[19]

The literature on approaches to sheltering urban Aboriginal people, in Canada and elsewhere, is embryonic. Some of this discussion focuses on the imperative of self-determination in programme design and delivery, particularly on ways to balance and maximise respect for community aspirations with measured programme success.[20] Researchers have also begun to challenge the efficacy of mainstream assumptions in dealing with urban Aboriginal homeless people.[21] We are now seeing serious contemplation, at least from Australia, of ways to classify effective and culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal homeless people.[22] This discussion, so far, concentrates on the whole continuum rather than specifically the services which Aboriginal shelters can realistically and effectively deliver.

The following are examples of the unique ways in which Aboriginal shelters in Canada actual do business – that which sets them apart. The headings mainly reflect categories mentioned by informants, but in some cases, the categories were named by the Author to capture his own observations. The list is illustrative and by no means complete. It serves only to communicate distinctness and sensible costs additional to those incurred by mainstream shelters. Unique approaches such as these allow Aboriginal shelter programmes to reach clients that mainstream programmes cannot.

### General Referral Service

As a rule and as a matter of principle, Aboriginal shelters go to great lengths to find emergency shelter for every person in need to comes to (or is brought to) their doors. Often these people are referrals from other agencies that recognise the shelter's competence in this area, or as an informant said, "don't want to touch Natives or their problems". Some shelters, such as Infinity House in Saskatoon, spend hundreds of hours annually on this unfunded but necessary activity. Some mainstream shelters make some effort to refer applicants onwards. Some others simply close their doors - particularly mission shelters which often, on religious grounds, are particularly intolerant of intoxication.

## Couch-Surfing Referrals

This widespread and unofficial service is endemic to Aboriginal shelters.  When other options fail, shelter staff can sometimes find a sympathetic friend or relative (their own or the client's) to put up the client for a day or two until other accommodation can be found.  This is almost unheard of in mainstream shelters.  Distasio et al. (2005) discuss the high prevalence of Aboriginal couch-surfing in the Prairies provinces, and observe that the social connections which support this practice relieve shelters of clients who actually have no home of their own.

## Shelter Access

This is a formal programme of some shelters (e.g., Na-me-res) but generally it is what an informant calls "one of those things we just have to do".  Shelter Access concerns the emergency transportation of homeless people from the streets to shelters, out-of-the-cold centres, and detox centres.  It also includes picking up homeless people released from prison or from local jail custody.  This costs staff time vehicle costs (often the shelter's van, or else a staff member's car).

## Interception and Repatriation

The Author suggests the term 'interception and repatriation' in the absence of a better term from informants. Two informants referred to instances when they or their colleagues had set out to intercept a homeless person who was at risk of being irretrievably ruined in a major city.  This is not by any means a common practice among Aboriginal shelters.  The fact that it occasionally happens says a great deal that is commendable about community solidarity.

'Repatriation' refers to sending clients back to their community of origin in instances when this proves feasible. Most Aboriginal shelters have, at some point if not regularly, paid the transportation costs involved in this.  The Reconnect Programme Village Youth Shelter in Prince George has no budget for this repatriation, and if it could, the shelter would send numerous street youths back to their communities as an organised programme activity. This shelter does, however, have a pop machine: "We call the pop machine our bank.  It's paid for a lot of bus tickets.  Taxi too, we just open the machine and take the coins."  Unfortunately, this provides instant cash at the cost of having to use other operations funding to subsidise the lost revenues to keep the machine stocked.

## Cultural Reconnection

This encompasses a spectrum of efforts aimed at reconnecting the homeless person with his or her culture. Cultural reconnection occurs on a daily basis through the shelter's Aboriginal visual uniqueness and its respectful way of relating to its clients. It can include occasionally providing traditional foods (fry bread, bannock, moose or caribou meat, fish, berries, etc.). Elders are often involved; their help is typically free but costs are associated with transportation, accommodation, etc. Cultural reconnection can include bussing clients to a pow-wow, a Métis celebration, an Aboriginal Day event, even a sundance.

## Intergenerational Reconnection

Regaining and strengthening respect for elders is a very important current in all Aboriginal shelter activities. Elders are often made available for counselling, as instructors in life skills and practical skills, or just to tell stories. Often these elders can reach the clients because they have walked the same bath at some point. Their teachings of history – including of the residential schools and life under the old Indian Policy – help clients understand the root causes of their own situations.

## Positive Role Models

This goes beyond elders as a positive role model. It is especially important for youth and young adults to be exposed to people who have confronted similar challenges and have succeeded in life's main activities. Older adults also need to see that, despite a possibly entrenched social condition, it is possible to change. The negative experiences of racism, de-parenting, exposure to systemic oppression and violence, and blocked opportunity make the importance of positive role models much greater than in the non-Aboriginal context.

## Community Reconnection

Aboriginal shelters frequently contact, and involve, the client's home community in efforts to restore bonds and even transport the client back to friends and family. This has sometimes involved paying for the client's transportation (typically a loan that the shelter does not count on being paid back). Community reconnection has included encouraging, and arranging for, clients to visit their community of origin however briefly, so that connections can be remade and the base of available supports broadened. Aboriginal shelters have been known to help with, and sometimes pay for, clients to return for important events which have a bearing on the client's ability to 'transition' to productive life. These events include births, funerals, and happy events such as graduations.

## Land Reconnection

For most Aboriginal shelters, this is less a programme than a current that runs through many of the shelter's activities. Land reconnection is physically visible in, say, a community garden programme. It can take the form of trips to pick berries, fish, or even hunt. On one level, this is a cultural reconnection. On another level, it has planned psychosocial purpose: temporarily removing clients from the constant negative barrage of 'urban jungle' influences such that they can reflect and be reached. This can be part of a client's detox plan.

Land reconnection can catapult youth clients to an environment where the clock has slowed down and background noise is eliminated, teaching them the value of patience and providing a setting to learn good listening skills. Clients of all ages almost always enjoy the recreation aspect of land reconnection even if they find it physically challenging at times. This often provides wholesome recreation for clients who have not experienced any worthwhile recreation for years. Chopping wood, making a fire, and catching a fish also require concentration – another mental application which many homeless people, particularly those habituated to drugs and alcohol, have seldom exercised for a long while.

## Healing Ceremonies

There is no 'one size fits all' notion of healing ceremonies, just as there are many variations on the medicine wheel. Healing ceremonies are primary spiritual experiences but they may have a social dimension. Healing ceremonies – for those who want them – occur on individual level, between a counsellor or elder and a client, and as a group experience. The setting ranges from the privacy of a transition apartment, to a group session, to a sweat lodge conducted in a basement or in the outdoors. Aboriginal shelters choose their counsellors carefully. They are particularly keen that counsellors respect cultural differences; for instance, sweat lodges are foreign to some Aboriginal cultures.

Traditional medicines of a benign nature may be involved in healing ceremonies. Sweetgrass is perhaps the most common. Its fragrance can often be caught in an Aboriginal shelter. It is worth debunking a myth, raised by two informants, which sometimes circulates in mainstream society and mainstream shelters. No Aboriginal shelter is known to permit its clients to use of peyote even though there is a rich clinical literature on its controlled therapeutic uses. One informant explained the reason as "It's medicine and not addictive, but for most clients we don't want to introduce one chemical when we're trying to get them off others." Most 'medical model' practitioners today are open-minded and embrace the vast majority of Aboriginal healing strategies if only because they 'do no harm'.[23] The involvement of Aboriginal shelters in traditional medicines is well within what is recognised as emotionally beneficial.

## Traditional Skills Rediscovery

This encompasses a wide range of activities including traditional crafts such as carving, sewing, story-telling, hunting, fishing, preparing game or fish, showing deference to wisdom, and listening well. The rediscovery of these skills is more than an exercise in nostalgia. These are valued skills in Aboriginal communities; particularly, the ability to function well in two worlds is highly respected. Aboriginal clients who rediscover these skills also rediscover a sense of purpose, a sense of worth, and a feeling that they have a useful role in their own community.

## Parenting Skills Rediscovery

This is a more vitally important activity than in mainstream shelters where fewer clients failed to learn parenting skills when in their youth. A much higher proportion of the members of Aboriginal families are dysfunctional for reasons of intergenerational cultural oppression. The residential schools played a dominant role in instigating this cycle. Residential schools pupils were removed from family life for most of the year. They were unable to witness what a parent should do and also be. In the residential schools they learned culturally contrary practices such as corporal punishment and fighting.

It is axiomatic that people from dysfunctional family backgrounds tend to be dysfunctional. The result, here, is adults who never leaned parenting from parents who never learned parenting. This systemic lack of parenting skills is of great concern to Aboriginal shelters that accommodate men and women with children. Remedying these deficiencies requires a range of exploration, therapy, and teaching measures. Time-consuming instruction is often required in basic life skills such as cooking, child nutrition, shopping wisely, budgeting, child discipline and encouragement, and even getting up on time to attend school or work.

## Anger Management

An informant pointed out that 'frustration instigated behaviour' is another dispossessor of social skills and parenting skills. This concept comes from behavioural psychology. People deprived of their ability to act on their environment will become, over time, increasingly anxious. When the anxiety is of long duration, they will resort to any behaviour that will provide temporary soothing of the internal discomfort.[24] This frustration is typically associated with anger. Many mainstream shelters offer at least some anger management counselling. This requirement is even greater in Aboriginal shelters, where a higher percentage of clients have self-control problems relating to origins in chronically dysfunctional and oppressed settings.

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Several informants felt that that externally directed anger is less a problem at Aboriginal than mainstream shelters. One remarked:

> *At the other shelters you're always on edge because somebody will pop and you'll be in the way. I don't have that fear. We have more respect here, and it's safer for us. Our clients are more likely to do something self-destructive, a real problem.*

Another informant stated that:

> *We can't just give them an anger book and say 'read Chapter 2 for next week'. Most of that stuff doesn't work here. We need a whole-culture approach and that takes time. I mean it takes patience which means staff hours which means money we don't have. We're practically volunteers sometimes… that's why we have burnout and turnover.*

### Historical Reconnection

This takes a leaf from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed by* Paolo Freire. The rationale is that, by learning the Aboriginal history that schools did not teach, clients develop a sense of the modern history behind many of their problems. This legitimises their experience and provides a means to talk about it, rather than just lash out in frustration at problems never fully understood. Historical reconnection of this sort helps clients make sense of the world rather than just react to unknown pressures. Historical reconnection occurs through means such as films, exposure to recommended books, counselling sessions, lessons, and exposure to elders. It can occupy a considerable amount of staff time.

### Community Garden Programmes

This kind of partnership between a shelter and a community garden is especially instructive for youth. Participants learn about horticulture, traditional Aboriginal medicines, cultural connection with the earth, and working with peers and elders. These gardens can produce flowers for community enjoyment as well as herbs, medicines, and vegetables for use by the shelter.

### Field Trip Programmes

These are organised outings, usually at least several times a year, involving staff and residents. A programme of field trips is carefully planned to achieve, in a cost effective manner, specific purposes such as traditional skills

rediscovery, land reconnection, cultural reconnection, or ceremonial healing.  Field trip programmes include, for instance, laser tag, fishing, medicine gathering, bowling night, pizza night, swimming at a beach.  These trips strike a balance between positive traditional influences, building of healthy social relationships, and simply learning to have fun without recourse to drugs and alcohol.

### Post-Transition Assistance

To the extent they are able, Aboriginal transition shelters provide counselling and other interventions when clients who have been 'transitioned' are again at risk of homelessness or at risk of difficulties with social services.  The staff frequently make efforts to contact previous clients in order to provide encouragement or assess the effects of the shelter's transition efforts.

### Off-the-Street Services

Aboriginal emergency shelters go to greater lengths, than most of their mainstream counterparts, to provide a warm and safe alternative for their clients during the day.  Most mainstream shelters require clients to leave after breakfast.  Those able to stay during the day at mainstream shelters are customarily the sick or those who request counselling or prayer.  The doors open to the others again at suppertime or prayer time.  The Prince George Native Friendship Centre operates a drop-in room and allows, under certain conditions during the day, men to use the lounge in its men's shelter.  An official explained this policy thus: "This isn't just about stopping people from freezing.  Homelessness is also about having a place to sleep during the day when you're sickly or you just need a day away from the bad influences."

### Housing Services

Aboriginal homeless shelters are acutely aware of how the extreme housing shortage on most reserves is both a source of migration to urban centres and a reason why return is often impossible.  Three quarters of on-reserve families live in social housing according to the results of the 2003 First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey:

> The 2001 Census reports that over 65% of Canadian families own their home. Most of the rest rent their accommodation. Social housing plays a minor role.  This is reversed in the FN context: 61.9% of on-reserve families live in band-owned housing which is analogous to social housing. Of First Nations situated in the provinces, 74.1% of under-$10,000 households are thus in social housing, as are 64.4% of under $30,000 households. Over half (57.2%) of households reporting $30,000 to $79,999 income

live in band houses, and 39.5% of the (few) over-$80,000 households also live in band houses. These figures —radically different from the general population —are explained by factors like: extreme poverty; banks not giving on-reserve mortgages without a federal guarantee; and sometimes-prohibitive geography related construction costs.[25]

Consequently, former reserve residents regardless of their previous income status have no experience with a housing market.  They often lack the knowledge to find, or even keep, accommodation in cities and towns.  They also often lack the letters of reference demanded by landlords.  Frequently they arrive with a credit history that is nonexistent, spotty, or poor.  All of this means that urban Aboriginal shelters have to offer some sort of housing services in order to prevent homelessness and to transition clients into independent dwellings.  Some Aboriginal shelters are operated by Aboriginal housing agencies.  These have the advantage of technical expertise.  Other Aboriginal shelters attempt – to the extent that funding allows – to organise housing placements or advocate to landlords on behalf of clients.

### In-House Counselling Services

Counselling of various types tends to be the main 'non-accommodation' activity of Aboriginal shelters.  The mainstream shelters that provide counselling tend to provide drug and alcohol counselling and/or spiritual counselling.  The clients of Aboriginal shelters have analogous counselling needs but their background often calls for additional counselling to reconnect them with culture, community, and economy.  The counselling that is called is often of the most basic life skills nature, from personal hygiene and grooming to parenting an infant.  Many Aboriginal homeless women are young and with children.  They often arrive at a shelter in conflict with social services authorities.  These mothers tend to need frequent supervision and extensive one-on-one counselling on a wide range of subjects.

Life skills counselling is more important than in the mainstream context.  A higher proportion of Aboriginal homeless people have no experience of functioning normally and independently.  Informants suggest that there are far fewer Aboriginal stories of success followed by catastrophic failure.  Dysfunctional families, systemic oppression, and other factors tend to keep these people from ever climbing the social ladder.  They did not lose life skills; they never acquired them in the first place.  The Ketso Yoh men's shelter, for instance, is keenly aware of this.  It offers a  structured Life Skills Programme with five core activities: Daily Living; Housing and Community Resources; Money Management; Self-Care; and Social Development and Employability.

Informants reported that the incidence of childhood and recent sexual abuse, among Aboriginal shelter clients, is consistently very high.  Past and recent histories of violent abuse and neglect are also very common.  Additionally, an unknown but clearly significant percentage of the Aboriginal adult male shelter population has been abused or neglected at some point.  The four informants asked about this all felt that half, or more, of

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Aboriginal adult male homeless people have been sexually abused at some point in their lives.  Sexual abuse counselling is therefore considered core business by Aboriginal shelters.

### Mobile Counselling Services

This is a variation on street outreach services.  It is suited to major urban centres like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.  The Na-Me-Res 'Gimmee Shelter' programme is instructive.  This offers "mobile counselling outreach to the homeless" delivered to hard-core homeless Aboriginal men through a van carrying two counsellors.  Potentially expensive (van purchase and operations, two staff salaries) activities of this sort are needed to reach homeless people who have given up on mainstream shelters, typically feeling they are racist or too over-bearing.  This approach concentrates on building trust so that these men are gradually brought closer to services they need but are reluctant to access: e.g., medical intervention, nutritional assistance, counselling, shelter, and ultimately transition.

### Street Outreach Services

These services are offered by workers who are on foot or who operating from vans.  Street outreach services dispense clothing, hot meals, and other essentials.  As with mobile counselling services, street outreach services allow homeless Aboriginal people who do not use mainstream services to be identified and reached.  Ideally, street services are co-operative efforts with public health officials and street nurses.  This is not always the case.

### Medical and Mental Health Services

It is well known that homeless people are disproportionately afflicted with physical and psychological maladies.[26]  All shelters face this challenge and some non-Aboriginal shelters will not accept homeless people who require medical supervision or assistance.  Aboriginal shelters do not have this luxury of saying 'no'.  The health of Aboriginal homeless people tends to be even worse than their mainstream counterparts.  Aboriginal homeless people are more likely to have physical impairments and even be wheelchair-bound.   Obesity-related health problems – including hypertension and diabetes – are very common.  Higher incidences of insulin-dependent diabetes mean that some Aboriginal shelters have permanent and partially disabled dialysis residents.  One has had a dialysis resident since 2004, who has lost a leg below the knee and faces language barriers.  The provincial ministry at first placed him in a boarding home, but he returned in two days due to cultural barriers and meal times that were too strict for him to maintain his blood chemistry.

Aboriginal shelters which provide meals try, when circumstances permit, to monitor their diabetic clients and provide adapted diets. This is extraordinarily difficult due to lack of training and funding, and because the clients are prone to alcoholism. Diabetes is an especial challenge. One shelter worker commented:

> Oh yeah, I sometimes wake them up. I even test blood and give them insulin when I think they're headed for shock. I've no training, I'm no nurse, but there's no money for a nurse. Of course if I screw up it's me that's in trouble.

Other workers observed:

> The deal is this. If we don't keep an eye on them they might just die under our roof. It's pretty hard to get a nurse into a shelter.

> They lose or sell their stuff and we have to get more. Meds, blood meters, you name it. We pay for it from money we don't have. NIHB has frequency limits. And you wouldn't believe the BS involved in the paperwork. It's exasperating.

> You'd think we'd have a nurse or maybe just trained staff. We get medical transients after all, and sick people off the street. Fact is we don't have any health programming and pretty much no special. The feds don't pay for that, the province won't either. You know what, we basically don't have any programming at all. All we can manage is keeping the lights on, and we're running in the red.

A worker at an Aboriginal youth shelter observed:

> Yesterday a youth came in needing 18 stitches. We see suicide attempts all the time, usually the wrists. They walk in bleeding or they do it here. People out there have no idea how many Aboriginal youth are alone and trying to end it all. We only catch some of them.

## Nutritional Services

Aboriginal shelters, which provide food services, face additional challenges owing to the special nutritional needs of their clientele. Informants stated that:

> Our clients are usually overweight. Normal body image for Native people, sad to say. They don't know how to eat even when they have the money. We have to teach them.

*Throwing fats and carbs at them is cheapest for shelters.  We can't afford to be picky in what we serve.  Oh yes, it sometimes hurts when all we can do is fill somebody's stomach with stuff that's making conditions worse.*

Cooks at Aboriginal shelter remarked about what they had to work with:

*Vegetables too far gone to sell at the supermarket.  Today carrots.  The cheapest meat we can buy wholesale or get given.  Cans and frozen stuff people and stores give us, sometimes good but the packaging is damaged.  Lots of starch to thicken it up and pepper to hide the taste.  Lots of pepper.*

*If we can't anywhere near follow Canada's Food Guide, just how can we do special diets?  We don't give up but there's not much we can do.*

Another cook said:

*You know that I want?  I want a government programme that pays for special medical diet for sick clients.  This isn't luxury, but of course the feds and [the province] won't agree on who pays even if it's really small dollars.*

Other informants stated:

*We have a great kitchen, the best I'm told.  We get medical transients so we know how to do special diets.  Problem is we don't have proper funding.  In fact there's no funding except per diems and not enough of them.*

*Sometime's we get meat and fish from the land.  Some of our community members bring back food for their homeless brothers.  I wish there's some programme to help out so we can offer traditional food regularly.  The morale benefit is just huge.  You can feel it.  What connects you more to your culture than caribou stew and bannock?*

## Youth Outreach Services

This activity must often be a parallel operation to regular street outreach services.  Different supplies, clothing, staff, and even food are required.  Street youth furthermore tend to avoid services for adult street people.  This is partly because they associate with their own for 'cultural' reasons, because adult-oriented services are sometimes inappropriate, and because street adults sometimes victimise street youth.

## Youth Shelter Services

The first point to understand, about the few existing Aboriginal youth shelters, is that despite their successes they barely make an impact upon the relatively new social problem of urban Aboriginal youth homelessness. Consider the Prince George Native Friendship Centre's Reconnect Programme, which includes a 20-bed co-ed shelter for youth.  Representatives of Reconnect indicated in December 2006 that their programme was in periodical contact with at least 240 Aboriginal street kids at large in Prince George alone.  The full number was thought to be double this figure.  Prince George's total population is only about 80,000 people.

The Author, during a tour of Reconnect's Village Youth Shelter by its manager, was approached by a resident youth who commented:

> They do lots of good here, without this place we'd all be on the streets and it's cold out there.  We'd be in some crack house, for sure.  I'm one of the lucky ones.  For sure.

Another example of Aboriginal youth shelter services is the Tumivut facility operated by Na-Me-Res in Toronto. This provides critical accommodation, programming, and services to 52 male, female, and trans-gendered homeless youth.  Tumivut is open to non-Aboriginal youth also, probably as a condition of receiving municipal per diem funding.  This facility provides the only culturally sensitive shelter and related services available to an unknown Aboriginal youth population in a city of 2.5 million inhabitants.

Aboriginal youth clients often suffer from serious mental disorders other than the collective post-traumatic stress disorder associated with residential schools legacy.  The shelter programmes have to be very creative in order to attract these street youth and rebuild the positive cultural self-identity they sorely lack.

## Employment Services

Aboriginal shelters and the federal government are well aware of the desirability of co-ordinating shelter and employment services for urban Aboriginal people.  Unfortunately, however, the federal government initially insisted that Aboriginal homelessness funding be channelled through HRSDC's existing type of Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements.  The 2003 evaluation of the NHI concluded that the implementation of the Aboriginal stream was delayed due to this mistake.  Nonetheless, it remains advantageous to offer homeless people employment and shelter services in a co-ordinated manner, if possible under the same roof as at Shanawdithit Shelter in St. Johns Newfoundland.

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## Justice Services

Homeless people tend to be in and out of trouble with the law.  The informants in this Study consistently held the view that Aboriginal homeless people are even more likely to have conflict with the justice systems.  The main reasons cited are dysfunctional upbringing and structural racism.  These tend to single Native people out for attention by social services and the Law.   It is furthermore problematic that Aboriginal people are over-represented in local jails, provincial prisons, and federal prisons.  Once released, with or without conditions to adhere to, these people need a roof over their head.  If they cannot find accommodation, they will probably re-offend, if only because of their possibly misguided attempts to survive.  Often their release is conditional upon having shelter and some degree of supervision; Aboriginal homeless shelters are the obvious choices.  The Ketso Yoh Shelter, for instance, accepts recently released men who qualify as day parolees, full parolees, Statutory Release, Statutory Release with residency clause, parolees on a methadone programme, escorted /unescorted Temporary Absence, and all parolees with the exception of ones requiring special care beyond the expertise of staff.

**Observation #3: The National Homelessness Initiative did not acknowledge that the provision of ongoing funding, for urban Aboriginal shelters, is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government; this created conditions contrary to sound management, accountability, and programme impacts.**

## The Observation in Context

The federal government has been careful to avoid suggesting that it is permanently in the business of funding any projects which support homeless people.  This is not a criticism, but foremost a reflection on the historic federal perception of legal responsibilities.  This perception is why the former National Homelessness Initiative did not acknowledge that the provision of ongoing funding, for shelters for homeless people, is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government.  This has resulted in an NHI which, from the perspective of shelter providers, solves big problems but also creates big problems.

Aboriginal shelter providers have found that the emphasis on one-time assistance has consistently created even bigger problems that they cannot overcome without on-going federal assistance.  Their dependency situation makes a compelling case for some sort of permanent Aboriginal shelter-funding programme.  An effective programme of this sort would require a federal acknowledgement that ongoing funding, for urban Aboriginal shelters, is a necessary and appropriate federal activity.

## Reluctant Intervention: Ottawa in the 'Homelessness Business'

In order to discuss the federal role in the area of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters, we need to consider why Ottawa has put itself in the business of funding any projects aimed at any homeless people.  The answer will lead us to why there is a special case for a permanent federal role in supporting Aboriginal shelter projects.

The federal government has been involved in the area of housing since the 1930s.  A strategic national housing policy began to coalesce during the Second World War.  The federal government remained almost the only government player in housing policy or assistance through the 1950s.  The involvement of the P/T governments increased sharply in the 1960s, particularly when P/T housing corporations were formed and expanded.  The P/T involvement was partially a response to fill voids that the federal government did not occupy or was vacating.  The federal system contracted sharply following the early 1990s when the federal budgetary imbalance was an extreme priority.  Ultimately, the national housing policy never developed into a strong or effective national system with central leadership.

Homelessness is, first and foremost, a condition of not having housing.  Social housing programmes, and related supports including income assistance, never fully developed before they began to freeze or contract.  Widespread reductions in social benefits, in connection with federal and provincial belt-tightening in the mid-1990s, conspired with a difficult overall housing situation and other factors to heighten conditions conducive to homelessness.  Ultimately, by the late 1990s, homeless people were a new and visible social problem that could not be ignored.  The federal government responded in 1999 not with increased support of social housing – a very expensive option - but with a cheaper National Homelessness Initiative likely to produce observable results (shelters) quickly.  The NHI achieved exactly that.

The National Homelessness Initiative was never conceived as an ongoing federal activity.  The scheme's temporary connotation is captured in the choice of "initiative" rather than "programme" in the name.  From its inception, the NHI was seen as 'seed money' until shelter projects could sustain their operations with other sources of revenue.  This 'start up' assistance has been widely appreciated; without it, many dozens of shelter projects would never have opened their doors in the first place.  This emphasis on 'start up' is congruent with the federal government entering this area of activity somewhat reluctantly, after years of mounting stakeholder pressure.

There is a certain logic behind constructing a National Homelessness Initiative on impermanent principles.  The constitutional division of powers is foremost on the list of rationales.  The sections of the *Constitution Act* (1982) which establish the primary division of federal and provincial powers (s.91, s.92, s.93) do not say anything about homelessness as a federal or a provincial responsibility.  The courts have not clarified responsibilities for services to urban homeless people.  Section 91(29) gives the federal government responsibility in areas not on the explicit list of provincial powers.  Again, in the absence of jurisprudence, it is impossible to argue

conclusively that 'homelessness' qualifies as a federal residual responsibility.  The legal landscape is best described as 'grey' if not somewhat overcast.  To the maximum extent possible, the provinces and the federal government remain strongly inclined to leave the funding and delivery of homeless services in the hands of municipalities and charitable institutions.

The federal government would not be in the business of funding homeless shelters were it not for  constitutional ability to raise more money than the provinces.  Section s.92(2) of the *Constitution Act*  gives the provinces powers for "direct taxation within the province in order to the raising of a revenue for provincial purposes".  Section 91(3) gives the federal government power for "the raising of money by any mode or system of taxation".  The federal government's ability to raise direct *and* indirect revenues allows it to generate vastly more revenue than the provinces, even though the provinces have most of the jurisdiction in the invariably expensive social programme areas.  This constitutional taxation quirk is at the heart of the so-called "fiscal imbalance" – a problem in federal-provincial fiscal relations since the early 1900s.[27]   The unevenness in taxation powers has been, at times, highly problematic.  Interesting ways around this imbalance have been tried by the federal government, usually insufficient provincial support for these ideas to be actually attempted.  The measures which have been attempted range from the creative 'tax rental agreements' following World War 2 to the present 'equalisation' scheme.[28]   No universally happy solution has presented itself yet.

This disproportionate spending power explains why the federal government has, since the early 1900s, funded organisations, provinces, and individuals with a view towards ameliorating social problems.  It explains why the provinces, and other stakeholders, continue to demand federal contributions in social areas such as education, housing, and homelessness.  Therefore, by tradition rather than by clear jurisdiction, Ottawa entered the field of supporting homelessness initiatives.  This entry occurred once it was clear that all eyes were on Ottawa to act first.

The action came after the federal and P/T governments ignored homelessness for many years, until such time as its prevalence and public face compelled some degree of intervention.  The three Territories were the most reluctant of all to acknowledge that homelessness is a problem requiring their attention.[29]   The reluctance of governments, to be the first to act, can be understood in terms of the principles of political economy: democratic governments to invest public funds in those areas of activity which appeal to the electorate.  Often these areas co-incide with the direct interests or well-being of segments of the electorate from which a government desires electoral support during the next election.  This is not the case with homelessness.  By and large, the votes of homeless people are far less important than the votes of other people who are sympathetic towards homeless people.  There are seldom, if ever, enough homeless people in place to make a difference even in a local election.  Moreover, in order to vote, one must have a place of habitation.

Assistance to homeless people is seldom a high priority for governments.  It is best described as a necessary evil, a financial burden which restricts government priorities for investment in more popular areas.  This is part of the reason why the federal and P/T governments have all treated homelessness as a social ill that can be

mitigated or eradicated. No government is inclined to admit that homelessness is permanent and the need for public assistance is permanent. This sentiment is reflected in the former NHI being established as an initiative that could be renewed, rather than as a legislatively based permanent programme. Yet since 1999, when the NHI was announced, it has become clear that homelessness persists at certain structural levels and expectations about federal leadership and financial assistance continue. The expectations are now long-term even though, in October 2007, Canada's economic situation is nothing short of extraordinarily positive.[30]

Yet there is no reason to think that Canada's homelessness situation has improved despite Canada's outstanding economic performance. It is no easier today for Ottawa to disentangle itself from homelessness assistance. This is a serious fiscal encumbrance for a Government with an ambitious strategic plan of tax cuts, national debt-payment, and increased low-condition transfers to the provinces. This agenda requires a fundamental rethinking of federal finances. The reduced revenues which result from lower taxation, and significantly less federal surplus available for programme investments, put non-mandatory expenditures such as a homelessness under the microscope. To the Finance Department, the federal homelessness initiative is now a greater albatross than ever before.

## Even More Reluctant: Ottawa in the 'Aboriginal Homelessness Business'

It is difficult to imagine a federal homelessness initiative just for urban Aboriginal peoples. To have put one in place, outside of a national initiative for homeless Canadians generally, would have amounted to an acknowledgment that urban Aboriginal homelessness is a federal responsibility. The federal government has long been adamant that all programmes and services, for any Aboriginal people on- or off-reserve, is technically a provincial responsibility. The consequence, in this case, is that the Aboriginal side of the NHI has been something of an add-on, an afterthought. This explains a great deal about why the Aboriginal side of operations has not worked out as well as originally hoped.

Canadians are often surprised to learn that the federal government maintains that it has no legal obligation to fund any programmes and services to any Aboriginal people. The only expenditures considered mandatory are treaty annuities, which are typically a symbolic $5 per Indian per year. For decades, the provinces and territories have reluctantly delivered most programmes and services to off-reserve Registered Indians, with no federal financial assistance other than what is received through transfers for the general population; e.g., Equalisation, the Canada Social Transfer, and so on.

On reserves, the federal government funds a minimum level of basic, provincial-type programming ostensibly because the provinces have refused to take over this role. The federal funding is calculated according to the Registered Indian population resident on the reserve; non-Indian residents, such as Métis or non-Aboriginal spouses, therefore amount to a financial burden on the local band council. Some provinces will fund services such as social assistance or medicare to non-Indians resident on reserves. Others will not. A comparable

situation applies in the Yukon, while in the Northwest Territories, the one organised reserve receives its basic services from the territorial government.

This on-reserve / off-reserve fiscal demarcation was not always so.  At one time the federal government customarily reimbursed provinces and municipalities for essential services provided to off-reserve Indians.  Sometimes Indian Affairs and the Department of National Health and Welfare established their own off-reserve offices and delivered the services themselves.  This began to change when, in the latter 1950s, the federal government offered the provinces cost-sharing of welfare services and hospital services.  The deal was simple: no deal unless you to agree to deliver services to off-reserve Indians under the same financial terms as applicable to others.

At an historic Dominion-Provincial Conference on Indian Affairs, in 1964, the federal government proposed transferring its Indian programmes and services to the provinces, with declining federal assistance until no financial distinction remained between Indians and others.  The provinces refused, except for Ontario which agreed to deliver social services on reserves if Ottawa paid the costs.  Ontario soon discovered that this deal created problems greater than those it solved.  The other provinces saw this immediately and took it as a lesson to stay out of programme delivery on reserves.[31]

In the face of provincial refusal to get into the on-reserve delivery business, Ottawa had no choice but to improve its on-reserve services to a level of provincial comparability, although it has never attempted to mirror all of the programmes and services offered by the province off-reserve.  In order to pay the growing costs of on-reserve services, Ottawa systematically terminated its remaining chargeback agreements with the provinces.  The last major agreements to disappear, in the early 1990s, concerned social services to Indians during their first year off-reserve.  Today the situation is uneasy truce, always at risk of a high court judgement with profound economic implications.[32]  The provinces have long memories over what they perceive as waves of unilateral offloading of federal costs.

How is this dispute possible?  Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act* assigns the federal Government responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians.  The Constitution makes no mention of what level of government is responsible for programmes and services to Indians, and there is even less hint of financial responsibility towards non-Status Indians, Métis, and Inuit:[e]

> It is unclear, from the treaties or the Constitution, whether the funding and administration of Indian programmes and services (P&S) are federal or provincial jurisdiction.  The federal Crown provides a minimum level of P&S - mainly on reserves - on Amoral@ and Ahumanitarian@ grounds rather then

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e :   The federal government provides no special services to non-Status Indians and almost none to Métis.  It formerly provided all services to Inuit in the North, who now receive most of their services from territorial (GNTW, NT) or provincial (QC, NL) governments despite the fact that, in 1939, the Supreme Court ruled that "Eskimos are Indians" although the *Indian Act* does not apply.  (S.C.R. 1939, Re: Eskimos).

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obligation.  At the 1964 Dominion-Provincial Indian Affairs Conference, the Crown tabled a list of moral, historical, and legal reasons why the provinces should take over P&S administration with declining federal contributions.  This was rejected, and four decades of dispute followed.

Section 91 (24) of the BNA Act assigns the federal Crown legislative responsibility for AIndians, and lands reserved for the Indians@.  The Constitution thereby reaffirms the pre-existing imperial and colonial doctrine of Crown responsibility towards Indians, but it fails to clearly set out which level of government has delivery or fiscal responsibility in respect of measures to ensure their well-being.  This raises questions of great importance.  Does neither of the two orders of government have an obligation towards Indian welfare?  Do the provinces have complete responsibility?  Is the responsibility entirely federal?  Is the responsibility shared?  In the latter case, should the provinces provide the services while the federal government pays?  Should the provinces pay for services delivered by federal departments?  Does the federal government have a guarantor role respecting programmes and services, or is it vice-versa? [34]

No one of legal consequence seems to dispute that s.91(24) gives the federal government exclusive right to legislative, in respect of Indians, on any subject it chooses.  During 1963 and 1964, Cabinet ruled that Indian-specific programmes legislation would not be enacted, in large measure because this would undermine the claim that the provinces are responsible because their programme legislation applies.  Any such federal legislation would amount to legal federal occupation of a formerly provincial area of constitutional responsibility.

The basics of the federal legal rationale, that in the absence of federal legislation the provinces ought to be paying for everything, were set forth in documents provided to the provinces in 1964:

(a)     Provinces have the same basic responsibility to Indians as to other citizens, for Indians are citizens of the Provinces, not legal wards of the government as is popularly believed;

(b)     The jurisdiction over Indians vested in the federal government is an exclusive legislate jurisdiction, rather than all-embracive, and is not inconsistent with the concept that the Indian is a citizen of the Province;

(c)     Indians, although granted certain tax concessions by federal legislation, in other respects contribute to the general revenue of the Provinces on the same basis as other citizens;

(d)     That through their sharing of costs with the federal government in the categorical pensions field [i.e. the 1951 Old Age Allowance, Blind Persons Allowance, and Disabled Person's Allowance], Provinces have recognised some responsibility for Indians;

(e)     That some provinces have given recognition to the principle in other fields and extend services to Indians and Indian communities on the same basis as to non-Indians and non-Indian communities;

(f)     That to deny any Provincial responsibility is to hold that the Indian is not a citizen of the Province - a position that is inconsistent in most Provinces with the right to vote in Provincial elections, and his obligation to pay provincial licence fees, sales tax and all indirect taxes. [35]

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Similar arguments continue to be reiterated by the Crown as its defence in court.[36]   The details are unimportant here.  The key message is simply that the federal government fundamentally disagrees with the provinces, the territories, and Aboriginal communities over federal treaty, fiduciary, moral, and Constitutional obligations to fund urban Aboriginal services.

What has this to do with urban Aboriginal homelessness?  The federal government's fear, of setting a financial precedent and suggesting federal responsibility, makes it extremely reluctant to establish permanent off-reserve Aboriginal programmes.  This fear also makes Ottawa think twice about instigating off-reserve Aboriginal initiatives with no counterpart for the mainstream population.  Therefore, a permanent urban Aboriginal homelessness programme might make good business and accountability sense, but it alarms the federal government's legal counsel.

### Most Reluctant of All: Provinces, Territories, and Municipalities in the 'Aboriginal Homelessness Business'

Hyper-sensitised to the legal ramifications of appearing to fill a federal void, these governments are often prepared to do nothing about urban Aboriginal problems and blame the federal government for not taking responsibility.  Provincial and territorial financial support of urban Aboriginal shelters varies by jurisdiction.  Municipalities also vary in their willingness to commit funds.  However, any willingness that does exist is carefully measured, and in no case is it whole-hearted.

> Of course we've gone to the province.  I've met MLAs and ministers and argued for money.  We write them letters all the time.  Sometimes they actually write back 'no, you're federal'.  More often they just don't do anything.

Nonetheless, Aboriginal shelters all seem able to furnish letters from their province, territory, or local municipality stating that the 'sustainability' costs of Aboriginal shelters are federal fiscal responsibility.  For example, a Newfoundland and Labrador minister wrote to the St. John's Native Friendship Centre which administers the Shanawdithit Shelter:

> You have indicated that the shelter is currently having difficulty addressing the operational costs.  I appreciate the difficulties that the shelter is experiencing.  However, I understand that when the shelter was approved under the National Homelessness Initiative, one of the conditions to receive capital funding was the completion of a sustainable business plan…Unfortunately the [provincial] Department is unable to provide additional funds for the shelter.  As the federal government has responsibility for programs and services to Aboriginal people, you may wish to contact the federal government to determine whether funds are available to conduct an overall assessment of the operation and to develop a go-forward plan.  I am

*copying [various federal ministers]…Alternatively, perhaps the National Association of Friendship Centres may have the capacity to assist you.*[37]

An Aboriginal shelter official explained:

*The filing cabinet's full of these letters. If we push them enough, they'll always put their 'no, go to the feds' in writing. When a minister writes this in a letter it gets written in stone, case closed, no appeal. That's where they're all at now. Operations is federal responsibility.*

The assistance that is received from P/T governments – when any is provided – tends to be in the form of contracts whereby the shelter provides a service that elsewhere is available to any off-reserve provincial resident through a P/T department. This applies also, to a much lesser extent, to municipal programmes. A principal source of service contract funding, received by Aboriginal shelters, is the P/T departments which provide social services and social assistance. Sometimes, particularly in the case of a chronically homeless person, these departments redirect social assistance payments to the shelter. Sometimes they fund an Aboriginal transition shelter to assist child welfare clients. This may be, for example and depending on the jurisdiction, some or all of the client entitlement for social assistance, foster care allowance, or children-out-of-parental-home allowance.

These per-service payments are in no case generous. The Author is unaware of any instance where this kind of assistance is sufficient for the shelter to sustain itself. Infinity House transition shelter, for homeless Aboriginal women and children, illustrates this. Its main source of funding – provincial per-client service payments – do not quite cover the costs of keeping the facility heated and in repair. When other minor revenues are added, the facility is chronically short $200,000 each year. This shortfall amounts to most the basic costs of sustaining the staff, cameras, and activities needed to provide basic supervision and offer transition activities. An informant from a different shelter explained this problem thus:

*No one wants to pay for programmes. That's 'sustainability' and it scares them. They might contribute by head count, but nobody and I mean nobody wants to officially fund Aboriginal core operations. Not the feds, nobody.*

Sometimes P/T/M governments will pay shelters a fixed per diem for each day a homeless person is accommodated. This is a widespread and hotly debated[38] mode of assisting shelters across North America. "Assisting" is the key here – These funding agencies seldom if ever expect the per diems to cover the full costs of sustaining operations. There is apparently always an expectation that the shelter must make up its shortfalls from other sources. Informants in the present Study know of per diems in Canada ranging from $17 to $72. Per diems are constantly touch subject in shelter funding. The informants who discussed this issue did not want to have their shelter linked to any criticism of per diems in their region. A City of Toronto document illustrates how variations in cost drivers can cause shelter per diems to greatly even within a municipality:

In reviewing other jurisdictions in Ontario, many jurisdictions were found to apply the provincial standards per diem rate of $39.00 in purchasing hostel services from community services. However, it should be noted that costs are relative to the level of services provided. We have been unable to obtain adequate information to provide a meaningful comparison of the level of service provided at the various purchased service shelters in other jurisdictions.

Recently the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI) found that per-diem rates in the GTA region ranged from $44.63 to $97.52 - all of which exceed the provincial per diem ceiling. While for many years, the City of Toronto was the only municipality to exceed the Provincial per diem, these numbers show that the situation has changed. Municipalities have been faced with increasing demand, increasing client complexity and increasing costs. There are a wide variety of cost drivers that impact on the cost of service delivery in the shelter system including inflation, food costs, utility costs, collective agreements, public health considerations related to infection control and food service, legislative requirements including Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety.[39]

Mainstream and Aboriginal urban shelters share the same problems regarding surviving on municipal per diems. Aboriginal shelters – when they are able to get per diems - have the added challenge of having to support culturally specific activities that mainstream shelters lack.

This being said, think about the Shanawdithit Shelter in St. John's, Newfoundland. The shelter's clients are welcome to consult the overworked employment counsellor in the adjoining Friendship Centre, but apart from the traditional diet served by the kitchen, there is no programming of any sort. The facility is in an arrested state of development because funding was never available to do more than build the shelter. The sustainability plan approved by the federal government was fundamental flawed, and what is more, it was approved despite grave doubts of officials and Friendship Centre representatives over the ability of the shelter to survive without continued federal funding. This is by no means an isolated phenomenon, but it is one that can be discussed as an example because the matter has been patently clear to all concerned for a couple of years.

Informants at the Friendship Centre had the following to say:

*Biggest thing that I have here, when the plan for the shelter was done, was diet, translation, being able to support people…I truly thought that, after a year or two of operation, we could overcome these hurdles with funding from the provincial government. That hasn't happened.*

*I knew we'd never reach the goal of sustainability…I knew that before we opened the doors, but I figured in a few years something would change. [We] made the three year budget sustainable on paper…the only way I could show sustainability was to budget $2.50 per person per meal. They knew this was crazy, but they accepted it and gave us federal money to build the place.*

Shanawdithit Shelter was expected to operate on the basis of per diem funding from various non-municipal sources, principally:

- Health Canada (medical transportation / NIHB);
- Nunatsiavut Department of Health;
- Mushuan Band Council;
- Conne River Band Council;
- Child, Youth and Family Services;
- Community Health (the provincial health department); and
- Human Resources, Labour and Employment.

Shanawdithit Shelter faces the problem that, generally speaking, the providers of clients feel little obligation to send Shanawdithit Shelter clients.  This state of the art, million-dollar facility therefore has an occupancy rate of only about fifty percent.  This is well below the financial break-even point.  A small proportion of its clients do not bring in any funding whatsoever because no funding agency will pay and the shelter will not turn away people in need. What is more remarkable – as explained by informants - that potential sources of clients will spend up to $150 a night accommodating an Aboriginal homeless person in a hotel, but not require that person to stay at Shanawdithit where the per diem is only $70, the atmosphere is positive and welcoming, and the quality of accommodation is very high.  The reasons cited include a provincial policy against compelling homeless emergency shelter clients to stay at a race-designated shelter.  The range of reasons, why Shanawdithit receives insufficient clients and per diems, is too complex to discuss here.  What is relevant is that Shanawdithit cannot survive without a base level of guaranteed core funding.  It cannot presently survive on the original proposition - per diems alone - much less implement the culturally sensitive support services that it was originally designed to offer.

The provinces, territories, and municipalities are reluctant to spend on urban Aboriginal homelessness, but they can usually be counted on to side with Aboriginal organisations in blaming the federal government for inaction on Aboriginal homelessness.  Consider the following media coverage from April 2004:

> Native leaders say there are more homeless aboriginal people in Winnipeg than there were a decade ago and they're blaming the federal government.  Ten years ago, Ottawa stopped investing in a program that built low-income rental homes for urban aboriginals. Since then, waiting lists for the existing properties have grown and so have the number of native people living in motels, shelters and on the streets…

> Larry Wercherer, who runs the Neeginan emergency shelter, says there are hundreds of homeless aboriginal people in Winnipeg who should have a better life. "Because of the lack of housing in Canada, the lack of social housing, the lack of affordable housing, it's very frustrating for them."

Wayne Helgason, with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and the former head of the Aboriginal Council, says it is impossible to know exactly how many people are living on the streets or in shelters…75 per cent of the people in shelters, requiring intervention or on the street, were aboriginal people." Helgason believes that number will continue to rise because of a lack of affordable housing.  But Manitoba's Housing Minister, Christine Melnyk, says the issue is not that simple.  "A trend that we're seeing is that the housing situation on reserves is really in quite a serious state, so we're seeing a lot of in-migration into the city of Winnipeg.  "So on-reserve housing plays a big piece in the whole housing issue here, not only in Manitoba but across Canada.  So again we need [Ottawa] to co-ordinate and to be in for the long-term."

Claudette Bradshaw, the federal minister responsible for homelessness, says Ottawa has already committed $1 billion to tackle the problem of housing and homelessness. Bradshaw says much of the money hasn't been spent, in part, because the provinces haven't contributed their share of the funding. Wercherer says *it's time people stop passing the buck and look in the right places for help.*[40]

None of this inter-governmental finger pointing seems to have accomplished anything tangible.

## 'Sustainability' Then and Now

The National Homelessness Initiative was set such that the provision of federal funding would be difficult to construe as an acknowledgement of federal legal responsibility towards any homeless people.  It has no legislative basis other than the *Appropriations Act* and the spending authorities are directives of Cabinet and Treasury Board.  The Initiative itself was established with a sunset date rather than as an ongoing federal programme.  The federal government probably was also mindful of creating dependencies which could lead to permanency.  Dependencies have, in fact, been created, and these were a major factor in the December 2006 announcement that a federal homelessness initiative would continue for another two years.  The NHI couched the need to avoid permanent entanglement in programme requirements concerning the 'sustainability' of projects.  'Sustainability' implies reliance on non-federal funding sources for ongoing costs beyond the start-up costs necessary to get a shelter on its feet.  These sustainability expectations were simple: in order to qualify for federal funding, the project must contain a plan which, if successful, would wean the project off federal funding and allow its continuation with funding from other sources.

This proviso ensured that funding demands, for specific projects, would not accumulate.  Projects able to diversify their funding base would survive.  It was evidently expected that that most or all would be able to diversify enough to survive.  Since financial demands were not supposed to accumulate, every year there would be a substantial sum from which to fund new projects.  Press releases, and often ceremonies, usually accompanied each new project.  These announcements were a constant source of positive press for the government of the

day. If funds were increasingly tied to supporting existing projects, the number of announcements would rapidly dwindle to nothing. The NHI's sustainability requirements therefore had various legal, political, and budgetary purposes. Readers should note that this is not a criticism of any particular party in power. It is a statement about the fundamental principles of political economy, which are natural features of parliamentary governance.

The NHI applied identical 'sustainability' requirements to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal projects. These expectations were sometimes overly optimistic and a number of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters closed as a result. These scale-backs and closures occurred after federal funds had been received and had been spent. Some of the projects were fully operational when they had to reduce or refocus their operations, or simply shut their doors. Other projects did not reach full operational status. The clearest indication, that the NHI was strongly oriented towards establishing programmes rather than maintaining programmes, lies in the fact that projects supported under SCPI Phase I were generally ineligible for SCPI Phase II. A number of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters closed for this reason alone.

This 'project die-back' phenomenon, associated with the former NHI, raises obvious questions of typical interest to an Auditor General: value for money; efficiency; realistic design of the federal programme; responsibility for results; and measurement of results obtained from the investments. Doubtless the appropriate persons and agencies will ask questions such as these in due course. The point here is that the NHI considered 'sustainability' so important issue that it was better to accept a not insignificant project failure rate than concede to an ongoing federal role in funding the core operations of Aboriginal shelters.

The federal expectations about 'sustainability' are widely derided in Aboriginal shelter circles. Informants frequently reported having repeatedly discussed the matter with officials and sometimes politicians. The following quotes should, therefore, not be a surprise to federal officials connected with the former NHI.

Cynicism about the 'sustainability' expectations runs high in Aboriginal shelters:

> I can't think of any Aboriginal shelters that really expected the provinces [etc.] would step in and pick up federal costs, but we all tried for years at the expense of getting other things done. It was all a game we had to play so we'd be able to say 'see, we tried.' Even then some us didn't get funding renewed and had to shut down.

> They won't let us past the door without a proposal that explains all how we're going to support ourselves by approaching this source and that. This is a game. We all managed to find a bit of support here and there, but the cost ratio is just not worth it. We can't scrape together nearly enough scraps to stay in business without the feds.

*When they devolve funding to 'communities' and we have to apply there, we get the same 'sustainability' stuff. Everybody has to play the sustainability game.*

*'Sustainability' holds us back, grinds us down. It sets us up to fail.*

*I spent 40% of my time over two years looking for money that I knew I can't get. And we all know that the feds we deal with know this plans are unreachable. In order to move us the money, they sign off on plans they know are just fantasy. They know how stupid this is, at least the ones I deal with.*

*I wish I had a dollar for every time people at HRSDC say 'it's time for the municipalities to step up to the plate.' That's how they say 'no' when we need money. Funny, they all say exactly the same thing, 'step up to the plate'.*

It is a fact that many, if not most, Aboriginal shelters have at some point assisted or sustained their core operations through creative book-keeping. (This is discussed under Observation #4.) They are often forced to cannibalise other programme funding – which is usually federal – or commit downright subterfuge when applying or reporting. One informant, a shelter director, made this comment:

*I can't figure out why they lay the same sustainability expectations on us as [for example] the Sally Ann. This is apples and potatoes. The feds are so scared of treating us differently, they waste money and our time and their time. We get really creative to survive another month or two. There's lots of us afraid that the whole homelessness programme won't survive an audit and they'll pull the plug.*

This is ultimately the weakest point in the current federal approach to 'sustainability'.

The sustainability of urban Aboriginal shelter projects is also contingent, to varying extents, to the degree to which the various players work together. Federal evaluators, in 2003, were "not able to find a clear pattern as to why some Aboriginal communities have been able to work successfully with the overall community, while others have not."[41] This obscures the fact that Aboriginal organisations find designated SCPI communities sometimes impossible to work with, and at best challenging to work with. It also conceals the fact that sustainability has been made more difficult by insufficient co-ordination or 'horizontality' between the federal agencies who deliver the NHI (and its successor, the HPS).

The evaluations of Aboriginal shelter projects have uniformly been diplomatic in so far as they have skirted around, or downplayed, these perceived deficiencies in federal organisation. These evaluations, and other documents such as funding proposals and correspondence, help promote a picture of a federal initiative that is better co-ordinated than it actually is. All of the Aboriginal shelter programmes, which provided information for this Study, expressed concern that the federal departments responsible for their funding continue to exhibit a lack

of co-ordination first evident when the NHI became operational.  The subject of insufficient federal co-ordination was raised by most informants.  Otherwise, when queried by the Author, the informants stated their dissatisfaction with the degree of federal co-ordination.  No informant expressed satisfaction.

Only one of the informants cared to be identified in respect of expressing concerns about deficient federal co-ordination – and this person will not be named in this Study.  The remainder are mindful of not upsetting the federal officials or politicians who approve their funding requests or who administer their funding agreements.  All informants would likely agree with the statement of one shelter manager: "we can't bite the hand that feeds us".  One stated that:

> Nobody's more vulnerable than Aboriginal shelters getting federal money from a programme that sunsets, from a government that measures success as lots of media announcements about new projects.  It doesn't matter if they shut down in a couple of years.

Another remarked:

> The feds pulled the funding plug on a raft of projects knowing they'd have to close their doors.  We are feeling very expendable so we don't rock the boat.  Think about it.

This is indeed worth thinking about.  So also are these informant comments about federal co-ordination:

> [it] costs us delayed starts, lapsed funds, insane reporting requirements…we can't move money between envelopes without breaking rules.  But they're all on the same page when money runs out and they say 'no more' – it's your fault because your plan didn't' work.  These are the people that signed off on projects they knew damn well would never be sustainable without federal dollars.

> They say don't lecture us about co-ordination except we talk to our partners all the time.  Well they must be talking about golf.

> They're really good at co-ordinating press announcements for new projects.  They're also experts at co-ordinating their C.Y.A. when projects fall apart.  In between, the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing.

Informants reported a range of serious concerns over federal administrative practices and requirements which have been mentioned – although diplomatically – in various evaluations.  It is especially difficult that separate funding agreements are required for each project, and each funding source has its own criteria.  Projects can be delayed when one part of the puzzle is held up due to administrative process.  It can, for instance, take months to get a cheque from CMHC for construction or renovation.  This can derail the whole implementation process

especially when weather is a factor.  Meanwhile the HRSDC money may be available, from which staff have been hired, but these employees now have little to do.  Alternatively, their hiring is delayed until the CMHC funding arrives, so extra costs are incurred in advertising the positions again.

This informant comment may be the most enlightening of all:

> *The problem is nobody is responsible for results.  Each department does its own thing on its own time. Nobody has authority to crack the whip and make things happen on time. Nobody is responsible for delays, cancellations, failures.*

## Observation #4: The former National Homelessness Initiative incorrectly assumed a level playing field in the abilities of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to support themselves with funding other from than federal government; yet urban Aboriginal shelters are systemically and significantly disadvantaged in their attempts to obtain non-federal funding, especially to pay for special programme activities designated 'Aboriginal'.

### The Observation in Context

Observation #3 questions the NHI's failure to acknowledge that ongoing Aboriginal shelter funding is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government.  The present observation (#4) expounds on how Aboriginal shelters are often frustrated in their attempts to obtain funding from the non-federal sources that mainstream shelters rely heavily on.  Upon closer examination, one sees that the specific barriers faced by Aboriginal shelters are, for the most part, deeply entrenched and unlikely to yield in the near future.

### Informants on Barriers to Raising Revenues

#### The 'NIMBY' Barrier

It would be hard to find a shelter whose existence is not vehemently opposed by at least some neighbourhood residents and business owners.  Whether or not this develops into outright individual or organised opposition depends on a range of factors; e.g., resentment of the poor, fears about personal security, fears about loss or

damage to property, and concern that the shelter and its denizens will depress local real estate values.[42]

'NIMBY', an acronym for 'Not In My Back Yard', is in common usage and very often heard by people in the shelter business.  At least five informants used the 'NIMBY syndrome' as the main reason for the resentment of some local residents towards an Aboriginal shelter:

> *Nobody wants a shelter in their neighbourhood.  Even if you sympathise with the problem, with the people there, you'd rather it's a few blocks away.  There's even some Native people that live nearby and support us, but you can tell, they hope we find a nicer building somewhere else.*

All shelters face some degree of local opposition due to 'NIMBY' concerns that may be imaginary or have some substance.  Aboriginal shelters must contend with additional resentment due to racism that usually simmers under the surface:

> *Lots of people think the homeless will lower your house value, steal your kids, hook them on drugs, root through your garbage or break in at night.  Just imagine what the thought of a bunch of homeless Indians does to them.*

> *Most local residents are decent people.  Those that made faces when we arrived come around when they see the social benefits.  Less crime, people not sleeping in alleys at night, stories about our clients turning round and getting back in society.  Same with every Native shelter I think.  It's just a few residents that make problems.*

> *Mostly they oppose us in municipal committees.  They fight us on grounds that on the surface are legitimate issues not racism.  Not always, really – I've heard some comments that hurt me deep as a First Nations person.*

> *The lobby for support.  Just a few of these people can stir up businesses that donate to us.  The main thing is they don't want us to get a penny of city money.  Some they think they can starve us out.  Maybe they can.*

Maintaining good relations with the local municipality is a high priority of every Aboriginal shelter.  The case study shelters, in particular, have proven to be fairly successful at this.  Unfortunately however, good municipal relations do not necessarily translate into per diems, other grants, or other support:

> *There's no reason we can't get per diems, it's residents that don't want us here.  If they don't stand up in committee and line up good reasons not to help us, they work on the alderman or the mayor down at the restaurant.  The politicians might not be racist, but giving us money costs them votes and doesn't get them votes.*

### The "Last Resort" Barrier

Very commonly, non-federal donors will only consider assisting an Aboriginal shelter as a 'last resort', when all other sources have been tried and the shelter is in dire straits:

> *How many times have I heard "We'd like to help you, but you can access Aboriginal funding that other shelters can't. Show us you can't and we'll see what we can do."*

This tendency amounts to placing a disproportionate burden of proof upon Aboriginal shelters. Sometimes they can only obtain non-federal funding once they have prepared and successfully presented an elaborate case demonstrating that no other source will provide funding:

> *Nobody else gets put through these hoops. Nobody asks the – [non-Aboriginal shelter] for this stuff. They just have to ask. We have to go in ready to pull out financial records and consultant studies.*

It is extraordinarily difficult to demonstrate that other sources will not assist, as one informant indicated:

> *They don't give us letters saying "go away". They just don't give us money. Could you sign a paper saying you can't help us? Yeah, right.*

### The Mythical 'Pot of Aboriginal Money'

Informants also stated that potential donors are overwhelmingly under the impression that "Indian Affairs" should be paying most, if not all, Aboriginal shelter costs:

> *They all think there's a huge ten billion dollar Aboriginal pot out there. All we've got to do is dip in. Send in a proposal and - what did I tell you? – you don't need money from us.*

The informants suggest that this misperception is pervasive and the most difficult of all to overcome. Few potential donors have much, if any, understanding of the intergovernmental fiscal relations surrounding Aboriginal programmes. Many know nothing about the Aboriginal programmes that are available. Most start with an assumption that 'Indian Affairs' – whatever that might be – has money which can be accessed.

Some potential donors have thought that 'Indian Affairs' has a special programme, additional to NHI funding, that urban Aboriginal shelters can draw from:

*Sheltering Urban Aboriginal Homeless People*

*I sometimes hear that INAC has a shelter programme we should tap into. They do but it's family violence and just for First Nation communities. People just don't realise that we're on our own outside the reserve. Federal programmes just stop. They don't even start if you don't have a Status card.*

In fact, INAC does have a permanent programme to fund family violence activities: prevention, intervention, emergency and second stage shelter, and transition. These shelters and associated programmes are reserve-based. Persons living off-reserve are ineligible. There are situations in which these services are unavailable on-reserve and the client(s) must be sent off-reserve to receive the services. In such cases, the Department will pay an off-reserve shelter according to prevailing P/T per diem rates.[43] Some urban Aboriginal women's shelters receive these clients and the per diem service fee. This occurs infrequently, if at all, and for these shelter it can be a significant source of revenue.

Representative of Aboriginal shelters routinely spend much effort attempting to educate potential donors about the fiscal realities they face. It is often possible, over months or years, to dispel the myth of the 'pot of Aboriginal money'. Unfortunately, informants report, once an official of a donor agency is educated and "comes on side", he or she tends to be replaced by someone who believes in the same myth.

Potential donors can indicate deep sympathy about the funding barriers faced by Aboriginal shelters. The most common ground appears to be what one informant identified: "Everyone loves to hate the feds" for providing less assistance than they should. While this financial limitation is in itself is a barrier, non-federal sources can use it as an excuse to do nothing:

*They can be really sympathetic about how feds are screwing us, sometimes a lot more concerned that we are. They're behind us all the way in advocating for more federal dollars. Problem is, they'll advocate but they won't give us a cent.*

### The 'Go to the Band Council' Barrier

Four informants remarked that there is a myth, among municipalities and provincial departments, that the band councils of reserves in the district should financially assist urban Aboriginal shelters. One observed that:

*They think these communities are the cause of the problem, that they ship people out to the town just so local taxpayers can pay. They think these communities should take responsibility for the mess they're making in the towns.*

This perspective is frequently encountered when Aboriginal shelter officials plead to their province or municipality for funding. Representatives of funding agencies typically do not properly understand that reserve communities are, with very few exceptions, chronically under-funded and facing serious shortages of housing units. They

also do not understand that the funding received by reserve bands is based, to a large degree, on the size of the population of Registered Indians resident on the reserve. Other residents, and off-reserve band members, do not factor into the funding calculations. Ultimately, very few bands have money to spare for their off-reserve members.

The federal government's policy, of focusing funding on Registered Indians on reserves, encourages bands on reserves to ensure that only their registered members benefit from the limited funding that is available. One informant described a situation where a band was prepared to contribute to an urban Aboriginal shelter programme only if it received a guarantee that the funding would benefit card-carrying band members. The contribution must also specifically not benefit non-Status Indians or Métis. Such a guarantee was impossible to give. It would compromise principles of equality, involve questionable book-keeping practices, and be subject to challenge in the courts.

Like the mythical "Aboriginal pot of money", shelter officials are often able to dispel this myth that band councils should be taking responsibility. Unfortunately again, the people brought 'on side' are eventually replaced by others believing in the same myth. So the cycle continues.

### The 'Matter of Principle' Barrier

Potential donors sometimes decline to assist on grounds that their assistance will do more harm than good. This cannot always be considered misinformed benevolence or simply paternalism. The argument is often heard from Aboriginal organisations and individuals, and from non-Aboriginal persons who support Aboriginal positions on treaty (etc.) right to services funded by the federal government. This rationale is based on the assumption that the federal government's fiscal responsibility is diminished by a dollar for every dollar from 'other' sources. This, it is argued, has a cumulative effect whereby Ottawa expects more and more of the funding to come from 'other' sources.

It is difficult to dispute that this concern has, historically, some basis in fact. Yet Aboriginal shelters are, by and large, not fussy over who gives them money or other assistance:

> *We know the history better than anybody else, but we have to try. Our responsibility is to the homeless people we serve. We can't put politics before people. None of us care where the money comes from. We only care where it doesn't come from.*

Fear of setting dangerous precedents often stops funding agencies from contributing to Aboriginal shelters. Infrequently, it seems, this concern also stops Aboriginal shelters from accepting money from First Nation agencies:

*Sheltering Urban Aboriginal Homeless People*

> *The bands and First Nation funds know that as soon as they give us a dollar, a precedent is set and off-reserve sources will start cutting us off. They're right and we can't take that risk.*

The 'matter of principle' barrier is especially immovable when assistance is sought from provinces and municipalities:

> *The municipality and the province aren't stupid. They know that giving us money gets them on the hook and the feds off, forever. They might help us with something we do that doesn't have 'Aboriginal' written on it. Anything that's 'Aboriginal' is constitutionally federal, so we have a real problem getting money for anything that culturally appropriate.*

### The Accountability Barrier

All of the informants made some reference to problems created by impressions that Aboriginal shelters are somehow deficient in accountability; e.g.:

> *Aboriginal people have got a bad rep for accountability. A few bands and political organisations have problems and we all get labelled. Our books are open to anybody, anytime.*

> *The other shelters don't have to prove they are accountable. They don't have to assure people donations don't go into honorariums and high salaries. They don't have to talk about this stuff or pull out their audits like letters of reference.*

> *I don't think anybody else asking for money gets asked for financial statements. Maybe they do, but they only read ours.*
> *Everybody here pays municipal taxes. I want to know where mine are going too, but it's more than that. It's about prejudice deciding what agencies get how much. Yes, it's a decision factor.*

One urban Aboriginal organisation operated an out-of-the-cold programme in a major city for about ten years. An informant from that organisation said that it closed as a result of persistent, unreasoned municipal concerns:

> *The City gave us per diems using SCPI dollars. The City didn't trust us. We had issues with the City – monitoring, unscheduled visits at night, four in the morning. There was no reason. We can't operate under that atmosphere. This is why the project was stopped. They get the SCPI dollars so we've nowhere else to apply.*

## Strategies for Financial Survival

Urban Aboriginal shelters have to be more creative than their mainstream counterparts if they are to survive. The financial survival strategies of Aboriginal shelters differ greatly from place to place. Let us consider the range of these strategies, using as illustrations the overall fiscal landscape of selected Aboriginal and mainstream shelters.

Let us start by considering the range of potential funding sources other than the federal government. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters solicit funding, and assistance in kind, from the same array of potential donors, e.g.:

1. municipalities,
2. provincial foundations,
3. provincial departmental programmes,
4. direct public appeals for donations,
5. charitable organisations such as the United Way,
6. churches,
7. food banks,
8. endowments,
9. estates,
10. individuals who volunteer,
11. revenues generated by interest and rents, and
12. gifts.

Yet there is generally a significantly lower willingness, among these sources, to contribute to Aboriginal shelters. The extent of this reluctance varies from place to place, but in all instances, it continues in the background to exert some influence. This obstacle ranges from reluctance which can be overcome, to outright closing the door to funding requests from Aboriginal shelters.

We have already considered the difficulties in obtaining municipal and provincial grant money such as in the form of per diems. We have also seen how per diems, especially, often carry impossible conditions such as a requirement to 'de-Aboriginalise' the shelter and open the doors to people of all races.

Sometimes it is possible to obtain provincial funding to deliver provincial programmes on behalf of the province. British Columbia appears the most open-minded of all the provinces in funding Friendship Centres, and similar agencies, to deliver various types of urban programming to urban Aboriginal people. Occasionally this funding is directly linked to specific homeless people such as youth or persons released from correctional institutions. More often it is of a general character, supporting health or social programmes which, while not 'homelessness' in designation, are important parts of the basic grid of services accessed by homeless people. The other provinces seem more inclined towards delivery by provincial departments or municipalities. For instance, Quebec has a highly centralised approach to programme delivery and Ontario requires municipalities to deliver

(and pay 20% of) a range of welfare services.  Newfoundland and BC are at opposite ends of the scale; the Shanawdithit Shelter in St. John's would like to deliver provincial programmes but the Province of Newfoundland refuses to fund it to do so.

Some of the benevolent societies, which are connected with mainstream shelters, have significant own-source revenue capabilities.  The larger ones – particularly those run by churches – often generate revenues by renting, leasing, or selling their properties.  This can range from renting halls for private events to hundred-year leases of valuable downtown lots.  Very few Aboriginal shelter organisations have any such revenues.  The main exception is the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.  This uncommonly fortunate Friendship Centre was able to purchase a large former courts building in good condition.  Various partner organisations, including governmental agencies and NGOs, rent surplus space there.  These revenues do not really make the Centre's shelter operations sustainable, but they do mean that more discretionary funding can be applied to various programmes.

The larger benevolent organisations have sophisticated and effective ways to obtain gifts and convert these gifts into cash to sustain operations such as shelters.  The Salvation Army and the St.-Vincent de Paul Society are good examples.  These organisations operate second-hand shops which sell donated goods.  This mode of revenue generation is far beyond the scope of Aboriginal shelter organisations:

> Ask yourself how many people would shop at a – Native Thrift Shop.  Mostly just Natives.  We don't have enough population to get into this business.

> There's no room in this town for another second hand shop.  The market's saturated.  Why ruin things for the Sally Ann?  The competition for donations is cut-throat enough.

On a positive note, this loss of opportunity sometimes leads to another opportunity:

> This sometimes works out for us.  The [benevolent society] can't or won't guarantee that things donated won't be sold for cash.  Well, we can.  Sometimes people give the things to us because they know it will be used by us or our clients.  Visualising the end user can make all the difference.

> Recently a truck full of used clothing was diverted to us.  The [benevolent society] couldn't guarantee it wouldn't be sold.  They are now looking at us like we're deadly competition.  This is all uncomfortable but we need to survive.  Our clients need to survive.

Aboriginal shelter providers tend to be small and local.  They are seldom operated by an organisation with regional, provincial, or national reach or scope.  With little exception, Aboriginal shelter providers do not enjoy the advantages of dedicated personnel whose function is to seek and obtain funding.  Many mainstream shelters

are in a similar situation.  No Aboriginal shelters, however, are able to fund-raise across very large catchment areas or assign fundraising to staff with no other function.

A database exists from which it is possible to make some general inferences about the ability of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to diversify their funding base.  Many, if not most, shelters are non-profit charitable entities registered under the federal *Income Tax Act.*  Shelters with this status can provide private or corporate donors of funds with a tax receipt redeemable against the donor's federal income taxes.  Shelters recognised in this manner also enjoy certain tax exemptions.  In return, they are required to keep proper books and records which the Department may inspect at its pleasure.  The annual tax returns of registered charities are publicly available at the website of Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).[44]  Appendix E contains a few illustrations from this Registered Charity Information Return database.  The Author chose these examples simply to illustrate how the financial capacity of shelters can vary greatly.  Nothing else should be inferred.

Let us start with Infinity House Aboriginal women's transition home in Saskatoon.  This is a small operation operated by the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) whose entire finances are shown in table E-1 (Appendix E).  This table obscures the fact that CUMFI's operations are broader than operating a shelter; i.e., affordable housing support, Aboriginal economic development centre, community development activities, etc.  Note that, overall, CUMFI's Own-Source Revenues[f] appear high (50% or above), but this is because of housing rental income and unusually high sales of goods and services.  The overall federal proportion of revenues is around 40%, with some provincial and municipal programme delivery funding.

Infinity House started operation in 2002 although CUMFI dates from 1993.  The federal government contributed $532,065 towards Infinity House through the UAS and $63,200 through the SEP (cost-shared between CMHC and the Province of Saskatchewan).  The Clarence Campeau Development Fund, supported through gaming profits, provided a further $100,000.  This fund offers financial assistance to Métis individuals and their communities in Saskatchewan for economic and small business activities.  Infinity House, like most other CUMFI programmes, operates on dedicated funding.  The other programmes delivered by CUMFI cannot underwrite the shelter without losing their own viability, and especially, contravening conditions attached to government funding.

From the outset, the sustainability expectations were unrealistic because no funding agency has been willing to pay for operations costs.  After expending great energy seeking diversified funding, Infinity House was ready to close its doors when the one-time-only federal cash injection ran out.  After aggressive lobbying, the provincial Department of Community Resources provided a once-only $200,000 to float operations through 2006/07.  Infinity House again (March 2007) faced this shortfall, which amounts to the ongoing cost of basic operations (staff, supplies, office equipment, etc.).

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f :    OSR is defined here as total revenues minus total government revenues.

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Infinity House Revenues, 2004/05 to 2006/07[45]

| Source | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Department of community resources | | | 200,000 |
| Federal | 281,500 | 200,000 | 81,500 |
| Provincial | 21,891 | 24,700 | |
| Municipal | 13,126 | 14,015 | |
| Community | | 14,500 | |
| Private | | 3,109 | |
| Total | $316,517 | $256,324 | $281,500 |

An informant connected with Infinity House said of the outlook for 2007/08:

> *It's a game of chicken. Ottawa will expect the province to step in even more, now that they gave us something once. They'll both play us until the last minute. If we close down, they'll say the other is to blame.*

This staring game, of who blinks first, is hardly confined to Saskatchewan. An informant from Newfoundland commented that:

> *The province has the attitude that the shelter won't close because Ottawa will bail it out. They know Ottawa can't let it fold after spending all that money. We're not so sure.*

Let us consider the major mainstream shelter in Saskatoon, the Salvation Army Saskatoon Community Centre / Home Community Church (Table E-2). This organisation's declared balance of focus is as follows: food or clothing banks, soup kitchens, hostels (55%); other services for low-income people (20%); and rehabilitation of offenders (25%).

Last year, Saskatoon Community Centre received $262,065 from other charities, $134,439 in tax-receipted gifts, and $147,809 in fund-raising. These sources show strongly positive trends. The provincial revenues were very high ($616,785) and federal funding was also received. However, the proportion of federal revenue was much lower (16.2%) than is normal for Aboriginal shelters and OSR, at over 43.6%, was much higher. Few people, least of all at CUMFI or Infinity House, would dispute the important role that Saskatoon Community Centre plays in delivering shelter and related services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men, particularly. It is also important to note that many of the services of Saskatoon Community Centre and Infinity House are not directly comparable. The point here is that mainstream shelters of this type are consistently, and usually vastly, superior in their ability to lever provincial and own-source revenues.

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Consider now Prince George Native Friendship Centre (Table E-3) which operates Ketso Yoh men's shelter and a Reconnect Programme Youth Village Shelter.  No other urban Aboriginal benevolent organisation seems to approach the PGNFC in terms of enjoying the benefits of economy of scale.  The organisation is large, well staffed by career personnel, and highly organised.  The capital facilities – particularly the massive Friendship Centre building – are mostly spacious and in good condition.  The PGNFC has an uncommonly good relationship with the province and it delivers several million dollars worth of provincial programming.  Own-source revenue hovers at around a third; the PGNFC receives rents from other social agencies who have offices in the PGNFC's main building, and revenues from arts and crafts sales help to offset expenditures.  Yet typical of Aboriginal shelters, revenues from tax-receipted donations are low for Aboriginal shelters (under $10K p.a.), there is no assistance from other charities, and municipal assistance is absent.

Table E-4 illustrates Na-Me-Res in Toronto.  Na-Me-Res, established in 1986, may be the senior surviving urban Aboriginal shelters in Canada.  It has grown to a 61 bed men's shelter with an adjacent 52 bed youth facility.  In 2006, half of its $4.4M total revenues came from municipal per diems, although this municipal relationship is not without its problems.  Na-Me-Res has managed to cultivate strong relationships with funding-charities and develop a strong individual and corporate donor base.  Indeed, one third of its revenues come from these charitable sources.  This diversification reflects two decades of persistence through times often difficult.  It would be wrong to assume that the remarkably low reliance of Na-Me-Res on directly channelled federal money is proof that good sustainability plans can wean Aboriginal shelters off the federal treasury.  First, geopolitical situation of Na-Me-Res is unique.  Second, like other shelters generally, Na-Me-Res has experienced periodic financial crises which threatened its existence and which required various sorts of bailouts and scale-backs.  Third, Na-Me-Res took well over a decade to approach a relatively stable budgetary balance.  Fourth, Ottawa remains indirectly in the financial picture.

Na-Me-Res received $1.4M in March 2003 to purchase, renovate, and operate the 52-bed Tumivut youth shelter.  The main partners were the Government of Canada ($1.24M in SCPI funding), the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto and Miziwe Biik ($65,000 as part of the UAS).  The Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services (MCFS) provides about $550,000 for Tumivut's operating costs. The City of Toronto's Shelter, Housing and Support Programme provided $132,000 towards start-up and some ongoing funding for ongoing operating costs.  This project probably would not have happened without such a large federal cash injection.  Provincial and municipal guarantees of funding of operating costs are unusual.  It reflects the division in Ontario of provincial and municipal welfare responsibilities, and the fact that Na-Me-Res essentially provides youth services under contract to the MFCS.  The strong stature of Na-Me-Res, as a valuable and accountable feature of the community, is a major reason why Na-Me-Res is able to lever such funding; shelters with a lesser track record would have difficulty.

Any Aboriginal shelter accepting municipal funding would testify that municipal per diems are a fragile way to finance operations.  Consider the illustration of Toronto Native Council Fire (Table E-5), which operated, until

recently, an out-of-the-cold shelter during the cold season (September to May).  The table shows Council Fire's declared finances when it was receiving municipal funding to operate its shelter.  Council Fire has been unable to find an alternative to the municipal funding, although this is not for want of effort including attempts to carry on using volunteers.  The loss of municipal funding was a long time in the making.  The fragility of this almost complete municipal was evident as least as early as 2000, when:

> About 200 demonstrators met at City Hall yesterday to protest against the deaths of 21 homeless people on city streets over the last several months…The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, which organized the protest, said the deaths highlight under-funding by the City of Toronto, and blamed the city for a shelter money crisis that is leaving the transient population at risk…City officials said it costs $43 a day, on average, to provide shelter for each homeless person.  Advocates for the homeless blamed the withdrawal of city funding for the closing of one Toronto shelter and the possibility that another may soon shut down.  Street Relief, a shelter at Sherbourne and Wellesley Streets, will close its doors to 80 clients this Sunday….  Toronto Council Fire, a 120-bed shelter also offering mixed accommodation, will try to maintain its operation through volunteer support.  Andrea Chrisjohn, Council Fire's treasurer, said the centre's board will do whatever it takes to keep the Dundas Street East beds available.  "We'll have to find ways and means of dealing without the city," Ms. Chrisjohn said.  But TDRC co-ordinator Kira Heineck said the centre's overnight service is very dependent on municipal money and cannot operate long-term without paid staff. "They can't run for free indefinitely," she said.[46]

Finally, let us consider a mainstream and an Aboriginal homeless shelter which exist, literally side-by-side, in St. John's Newfoundland.  These are the Shanawdithit Shelter (operated by St. John's Native Friendship Centre) and the Salvation Army's St. John's Downtown Core Ministries' Wiseman Centre.

The Friendship Centre which operates Shanawdithit Shelter, and the Prince George Friendship Centre which operates two shelters, are at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of size, revenues, capacity, and influence.  The St. John's Friendship Centre's 2006 revenues were $710K or one-tenth those of Prince George.  Shanawdithit Shelter officially opened on 4 December 2003 primarily due to $819K in NHI funding and $185K from the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programme (cost-shared 75:25 between CMHC and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation).  The shelter was built, as an addition to the Friendship Centre, using federal money almost exclusively ($943K).  No provincial capital funding was involved and, as described earlier, the shelter is presently in crisis.  It operates at half-capacity owing to insufficient client referrals and accompanying per diems.  There is no fixed source of operating revenues other than per diems.  Apart from providing a roof and a traditional diet, the shelter's operations never developed as expected.  There is no culturally specific programming to speak of: no translation, no drug and alcohol counselling, no life skills counselling, no healing programme, etc.  The Friendship Centre's Statement of Cash Flow's cash is strongly negative with a $99,741 decrease in cash.

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre's modest non-shelter programming[47] is supported primarily by dedicated grants and programme funding. This comes from departments and agencies who expect to see results for their investments. The funding situation is so tight that this small Friendship Centre has been going deeper into the red in order to keep its shelter's doors open. Additionally, and like most shelters, Shanawdithit (or more correctly the Friendship Centre) has considerable contingent liability. Here it is in the form of a $225,500 mortgage agreement with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. This will be forgiven if the shelter operates as agreed until December 2014. This debt may well kill the Friendship Centre if the shelter folds for want of operations funding.

Consider now the Salvation Army's St. John's Downtown Core Ministries' Wiseman Centre, situated literally next-door (Table E-6). Before we proceed further, it is important to understand that this comparison is in no way a criticism of the services provided by the Wiseman Centre or a suggestion that it does not deserve financial support. The intent is merely to contrast the financial landscapes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters.

The large Wiseman facility is 100% concerned with providing shelter to homeless men aged 30-65. Press releases announced, on 2 October 2005, NHI funding of $1.1M to redevelop the Wiseman Centre. Additionally, CMHC and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation cost-shared $740K and the Province conveyed the Wiseman Centre property (valued at $396K) to the Salvation Army. The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment was to provide $600K plus other contributions for operating costs.

Table E-6 shows that the Wiseman Centre was already an established operation with $715,704 in revenues in 2006, apparently mostly from provincial per diems. Almost 17% of its revenues could be called own-source and mostly from other charities. The Wiseman Centre was able to obtain for its expansion $740K from its parent organisation, the Salvation Army, plus $516K in in-kind support from the corporate community.

Shanawdithit Shelter, typical in this respect of Aboriginal shelters, enjoyed no such support. It is completely on its own and unable to raise more than a few thousand dollars annually through cash and in-kind donations (a recent Hydro donation of $1,100 was considered a great event). Furthermore, the Wiseman Centre can count on the approximately $600K in per diems from the province while the Shanawdithit Shelter, for various reasons, cannot count of half of the minimum number of per diems needed for survival. This contrast is even more striking because these two shelters are physically situated on adjacent lots.

Without referring to a particular shelter, we come now to the survival strategy of urban Aboriginal shelters that is the least desirable, the most common, and generally the one doomed to fail: cannibalising other budgets. The Author has had the opportunity to examine the book-keeping of a number of Aboriginal shelters. These were as transparent and meticulous as one expects from a small delivery agency with a shoestring budget. Yet

it is clear that some, and perhaps many, Aboriginal shelter providers have found it necessary to cannibalise other programming in order to keep the doors of their shelters open. Apart from being an unfortunate business practice, this sacrifice weakens other services which typically also operate under federal funding.

The NHI has expected shelter providers to use other funding sources particularly for ongoing operations, while overlooking the high probability that this means spending other federal money for purposes other than intended. This 'other' programme funding is provided according to the terms of contribution agreements. These spell out the intent of the agreement and how the funds may be spent. This cannibalisation of 'other' programme money raises questions about diminished programme impacts and contravention of Cabinet and TB spending authorities. The Author is aware of Aboriginal shelters which have also felt compelled to cannibalise provincial project-specific funding for the purpose of survival.

Aboriginal shelter providers have tended to become adept at disguising how government funding is moved around and spent. The most striking examples of this 'art' involve capital funding which has been has been redirected towards programme operations and maintenance (O&M). In one instance, a shelter secured funding for an expensive major piece of equipment related to shelter access by disabled persons. All agreed that the equipment was undeniably necessary, and in fact, it continues to be put to good use. Nonetheless, the budget that was submitted in order to obtain this funding was far above the cost of the actual equipment and its installation. This was so that the surplus could be applied to core operations of the shelter – for which there was no adequate or dedicated O&M funding source. This sleight of hand was the main reason why the doors stayed open for months. In other instances, the actual construction or renovation was downscaled, leaving a capital budget surplus which could sustain operations for a while.

Informants have stated that federal officials often know that this practice occurs. Some shelter officials have been up-front about it, yet nothing has been done by government officials presumably because they recognise contradictions inherent in the NHI. Under the status quo, these officials have only two choices: raise an alarm to their department's audit branch, or ignore the matter. The latter seems the universal rule. It is a fact that taking action would most likely cause the shelter to cease operations. No one wants the media attention that this would attract.

**Observation #5: An emerging political competition for control of urban Aboriginal shelter delivery poses real and significant risk to the present fragile and partial collection of Aboriginal shelter programmes.**

Almost every informant, without any prompting, made a special point of expressing deep concern about a perception of increasing politicisation of services for urban Aboriginal homeless people.  This concern is very strong, and very prevalent, among people at all levels who are involved in Aboriginal homeless services.  These concerns centre on an emerging political debate over control of urban Aboriginal programmes.

Urban Aboriginal shelters are worried that rivalry, among Aboriginal umbrella organisations, could if unchecked translate into a damaging competition for scarce financial resources.  The roots of this concern lie in a perceived movement away from pan-Aboriginal social measures to social measures specific to identity groups.  From the viewpoint of shelters struggling to keep their doors open, fragmentation of funding along identity lines can only add to the already strong financial competition.  Furthermore, informants expressed considerable concern that some identity-specific political organisations are positioning themselves to take over shelters that are entirely pan-Aboriginal in the sense that they offer services to all.

In order to understand these concerns, one must first have a sense of how urban Aboriginal shelters are mandated.  Most, if not all, urban Aboriginal shelters are operated by off-reserve incorporated entities which are governed by boards.  The board membership is usually all Aboriginal.  Sometimes these boards are comprised of people from one band, nation, or other level of community.  At other times they comprise a mix which usually represents the cultural diversity of the local Aboriginal population.  The main operator of urban Aboriginal shelter programmes is the network of locally established Native Friendship Associations.  Membership on their governance boards is open to any Native person in the geographic area.  Most of the boards which govern urban Aboriginal shelters are open to Native people regardless of their identity.  Some would welcome non-Aboriginal members who are willing to assist.

The Author is unaware of any urban Aboriginal shelter provider that would turn away any applicant because he or she is not from a particular Aboriginal group.  Moreover, all of the organisations contacted in this Study will offer accommodation to non-Native people on humanitarian grounds.  It is clear from informants that their organisations are fiercely proud of this inclusive, pan-Aboriginal approach to service delivery, and often, scornful of those who would rather than services be governed and delivered along strict identity lines.  The informants were consistent that this makes little practical and economic sense, and that the people who count – the urban clientele – have little interest in politicising service delivery.

So far, at least, the involvement of identity-based organisations in urban Aboriginal shelter delivery has been inclusive in the widest sense of the term. There are a handful of instances when an identity-specific urban organisation operates an urban shelter, and even then, there are few if any caveats on who may govern, be employed, or receive services. Consider the Infinity House Transition Shelter which is operated by the Central Urban Métis Federation (1993) Inc. or CUMFI. This is a Métis-governed non-profit service organisation with a mandate foremost "to strive for improved social and economic conditions for the Métis." "Métis" is a very loose identifier in this instance. The application form for CUMFI membership does not ask questions about origins and, in fact, Registered Indians can join as long as they identify with the goals of the organisation.

This organisation, over the sixteen years of its existence, filled a void in local urban Aboriginal representation and became a significant local Aboriginal voice. Notwithstanding the occasional hiccoughs, the relationship between CUMFI and the Saskatoon Indian and Friendship Centre (SIMFC) is best described as integrated, mutually supportive, and positive. The SIMC, incorporated in 1968, is mainly concerned with improving the quality of life of all Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. This Centre develops and delivers various social, recreational, cultural and educational programmes. Members of the CUMFI board usually sit on the SIMFC board, and vice versa. When a need for local homeless services arose, it was natural that CUMFI, which operated a housing programme, should operate the shelter.

The Central Urban Métis Federation created Infinity House knowing that the majority of the clientele would be Registered Indians recently arrived from reserves. Some of Infinity House's clientele identify as Métis and come from an intergenerational Métis tradition, while most have First Nations identity and be "Status" or "non-Status". CUMFI does not ask to see a membership card when someone applies for services, and while it has a Métis board, it does not have a 'one size fits all' Métis approach to delivering services. Consequently, Infinity House offers transitional assistance that is tailored to the exact cultural circumstances of the client, whether or not the client is First Nation or Métis in heritage.

It is fair to say that the overwhelmingly pan-Aboriginal character of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters is working on a practical level. The informants state this uniformly and it is difficult to disagree with them. There are few complaints from their homeless clientele. It is hard to argue that a re-alignment of funding or governance along identity lines is economic or even remotely affordable. It is also difficult to justify why further risk should be injected into an already fragile collection of urban Aboriginal shelter providers. These types of providers have gained experience, and so the informants ask, why create risk when success can be built upon? This is a good question.

The main 'Ottawa' query, posed by informants, is whether the federal government will buy into the principle that identity-specific Aboriginal service delivery should replace pan-Aboriginal service delivery. This concern is not unfounded. Already there is palpable friction, in some instances, at local level. Some organised political factions – i.e., of First Nation identity – have a problem with a Métis organisation in Saskatoon occupying a

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service delivery niche that they think should be occupied by a First Nation organisation. Other First Nation factions see no problem at all. Some informants related incidents of reserve-based band councils trying to extend their reach to include the delivery of services to urban shelter services to their urban band members. This, it was explained, creates an unnecessary competition for finite and insufficient resources. It also elevates tensions, complicates what should be a simple business of providing services to people who apply, and puts into question appropriate use of federal funding.

Few would dispute that the past several years have seen a rise in public understanding that Aboriginal people know best how programmes to their own people should be delivered. One also observes – especially through the federal Round Table discussions – an increase in the rhetoric and expectations concerning off-reserve service delivery. The Inuit Tapirisat Kanatanami, the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council (MNC), and often their provincial affiliates of these organisations have become insistent that off-reserve services be "Inuit controlled", "First Nation controlled", and 'Métis controlled' respectively. Opinions vary on what this actually means, but it is fair to say that 'First Nation controlled' often equates to 'controlled by a band of Registered Indians, usually reserve-based, whose members and leadership are Registered Indians under the *Indian Act*.' Interpretations of this sort may not sit well with non-Status Indians and Métis, or with off-reserve band members who do not want to fall under the jurisdiction of their community of origin or membership.

There is, without doubt, a turf war over who represents off-reserve Aboriginal people and who should be providing them with services. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) and its affiliates claim representation over off-reserve urban and rural Aboriginal people generally. This includes Status Indians, non-Status Indians, Métis, and also Inuit in the southern Urban centres. Some of these people do, in fact, self-associate with this organisation. Others self-associate also with a band, a Métis nation or association, and so on. To complicate matters further, CAP and the MNC, and many of their affiliates, do not have contiguous or even formal membership lists.

The informants in this Study all displayed a high degree of awareness about these and related political currents. In order to illustrate the point that a turf war for off-reserve services is alarming urban service providers, one informant brought to the Author's attention the position on urban representation of Aboriginal peoples articulated by CAP in the 2005 Aboriginal Governance Roundtable. The details are not important here; what is significant is that the vision is radically different from the band-centred model promoted by the AFN, and thus guaranteed to stimulate heated debate.[48] Another article, quoting CAP leader Patrick Brazeau, called for the abolition of reserves and reduction in chiefs from over 600 to about 70 on grounds including questionable economics in funding so many communities.[49]

Another informant handed the Author an article in the current January 2007 *Windspeaker* which illustrated political rivalries in Ottawa. This was in order to make the point that the debate has reached a disturbing intensity, at least at national level:

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> During his opening speech to the delegates, [Assembly of First Nations] Fontaine was unusually aggressive in his criticism of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP, a group with which [Minister] Prentice has worked more closely than have previous ministers. "It is also deeply insulting when the government supports a puppet organisation, with a straw man for a leader, who slams First Nations leadership…They don't have a definable constituency. I don't know where [CAP Leader] Patrick [Brazeau] receives his mandate from…"[50]

This article conveys a sense of how heated the off-reserve 'turf war' has become, at least at national level. A month later, Mr. Brazeau responded in the *Globe and Mail* with a pointed attack on the AFN.[51] The existence of unproductive rivalry over programme delivery, between the NAFC and the AFN at least, has been acknowledged through an April 2006 memorandum of understanding between the NAFC and the AFN. It might seem a simple matter for this MOU to separate politics from programme delivery, but it was written 'without prejudice' and stops short of saying the AFN should stay out of programme delivery and the NAFC out of politics. It does however establish improved communications between these organisations.[52] It also has done little if anything to change rivalries at regional and local levels.

The above examples were chosen to illustrate the existence of political rivalry, and nothing more. The point here is simply that urban Aboriginal shelter providers are keenly aware of a real, divisive, and impassioned debate over who represents off-reserve Aboriginal people, and who should provide them with services. The informants consulted in this Study were fearful of this debate complicating their core business of sheltering urban Aboriginal people regardless of their circumstances or ancestry.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

The terms and conditions (Ts&Cs) of the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) were developed with a sense of urgency between the announcement of the HPS in December 2006 and the release of these Ts&Cs in early March 2007.[53] The federal government clearly, and rightly, recognised that many Aboriginal shelters would otherwise have to shut their doors starting on 1 April 2007. The operators of urban Aboriginal shelters were much relieved by assurances from officials that their prime concern - some form of continuity funding – would be addressed.

From the point of view of Aboriginal shelter providers, these financial bailouts are a step in the right direction, but still relief of the symptoms rather than solution of the problems. The Ts&Cs of the new HPS have set the course of federal homelessness activities for the next two years, and federal officials are already talking about a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) in 2008. This would define a successor homelessness initiative, or much less likely, withdraw Ottawa from the business of funding homelessness projects. Federal officials are already scheduling consultations with Aboriginal stakeholders with a view to crafting a well-developed MC for a more effective successor initiative.

The recommendations presented below are intended to assist in the consultations, research, and analysis leading up to an MC in 2008. Some of them propose fundamental policy changes which clearly require further cost-benefit analysis. Others could be implemented incrementally throughout the two years of the HPS, through administrative changes or through minor amendments to the Ts&Cs.

The Auditor General will, when she reports on the NHI, probably have plenty to say about the six years of challenges surrounding the funding and operation of urban Aboriginal shelter projects. Representatives of these shelters are concerned about this likelihood. This issue is not presented here as a criticism. It is a wake-up call about evolving the Aboriginal part of the HPS in the direction of a permanent programme that funds operations costs as well as new projects. The new Government can fairly claim that the NHI's deficiencies date from when its predecessor was in power. It therefore makes good political and sound management sense that the transformation, of the Aboriginal shelter component at least, be sweeping in nature and operational in two years.

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## Recommendations Further to Observation #1

**The approaches of shelters for Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, differ fundamentally from mainstream shelters; these differences make Aboriginal shelters more effective than mainstream shelters in assisting Aboriginal clients.**

Hopefully this Report has been successful at conveying the uniqueness, and merits of, the culture-sensitive approaches of urban Aboriginal shelters. These facilities are able to reach hesitant homeless Aboriginal people who for various reasons avoid mainstream shelters. They are able to establish conditions of mutual self-respect to a much greater degree, which paves the way to voluntary co-operation in efforts to 'transition' the clientele into productive social life. They are far better able to affect this transition through innovative culture-specific techniques. These techniques are based on the principle that only Aboriginal planners, managers, and front-line staff can understand the unique problems and implement the solutions.

This coin has another side: whereas Aboriginal shelters are part of the solution, many mainstream shelters are part of the problem. Mainstream shelters offering services to urban Aboriginal homeless people often display intolerance and paternalism. In the case of church-run mainstream shelters, this can replicate for Aboriginal clients negative aspects of the residential schools experience in ways varying from subtle to very direct. Informants from Aboriginal shelters are very clear about this. They are also overwhelmingly appreciative of the church-run and general shelters which make strong, genuine efforts to display sensitivity.[54]

The psychosocial impacts of insufficiently sensitive mainstream shelters should not be under-estimated. Financially assisting insensitive mainstream shelters, to assist Aboriginal clients, is a serious policy matter for the federal government which, in 1998, offered an apology for the old Residential Schools Policy and has recently signed an historic financial settlement.[55] It is inconsistent to provide Aboriginal-designated funding to mainstream shelters – particularly church missions – who have a paternalistic approach that does not clearly recognise the Aboriginal context. It is particularly inappropriate for federal Aboriginal-targeted homelessness funding to be given to religious institutions that require prayer and compliance to religious doctrine as a condition of assistance.

Federal 'Aboriginal' funding, that is provided to non-Aboriginal shelters with Aboriginal clienteles, is an inappropriate application of targeted funds unless the recipients use this funding to support tailored, Aboriginal-sensitive activities. The question, therefore, is how to avoid supporting counter-productive and culturally disrespectful programmes without incurring the risks of being judgemental.

It is proposed that the following funding conditions would solve this policy inconsistency without incurring risk, in a manner that would be hard to criticise politically. These caveats would provide reasonable assurance against paternalist excesses being funded with federal homelessness money, while allowing open-minded mainstream shelters access to 'Aboriginal' homelessness funding for appropriate purposes.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.1:** 'Aboriginal' funding for shelters should be divided into two streams:

1. The entire existing 'Aboriginal' envelope should be reserved for the use of Aboriginal organisations delivering shelter services to Aboriginal people.

2. A modest proportion of the general envelope should be reserved for non-Aboriginal organisations delivering shelter services to Aboriginal people, and which can demonstrate a genuine and sufficiently large Aboriginal clientele as well as meet the caveats of Recommendation 1.2.

**Recommendation 1.2:** 'Aboriginal' funding provided to non-Aboriginal shelter providers should have three principal caveats:

1. the provider must have a dedicated Aboriginal homelessness programme to which the funds must be 100% applied;

2. the programme must be designed and supervised by Aboriginal people;

3. the funding should be conditional upon the non-Aboriginal shelter securing a partnership with an Aboriginal organisation with experience in urban programme delivery.

**Recommendation 1.3:** Strict reporting requirements, built into the contribution agreement, should provide assurance that none of this Aboriginal-targeted directly or indirectly supports, or defrays the core costs of, these shelters or the charitable organisations that run them.

**Recommendation 1.4:** Contribution agreements providing targeted 'Aboriginal' homelessness funding to non-Aboriginal agencies should contain a clause whereby the recipient agrees that, recognising the historic residential schools experience, Aboriginal clients will be provided humanitarian assistance if they do not wish to participate in religious activities or observance.

**Recommendation 1.5:** The caveats in Recommendations 1.1 to 1.3 should apply to federal homelessness funding targeted to Aboriginal people, whether funded direct from the federal department or through a designated community.

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## Recommendations Further to Observation #2

**Some of the culturally sensitive features, programmes, and services that characterise the core business of Aboriginal shelters require special funding over and above what a mainstream shelter needs for its own core business.**

From discussions with Aboriginal shelter representatives, and from the literature, the Author has suggested that there are 28 unique aspects of Aboriginal shelters:

1.  General Referral Service
2.  Couch-Surfing Referrals
3.  Shelter Access
4.  Interception and Repatriation
5.  Cultural Reconnection
6.  Intergenerational Reconnection
7.  Positive Role Models
8.  Community Reconnection
9.  Land Reconnection
10. Healing Ceremonies
11. Traditional Skills Rediscovery
12. Parenting Skills Rediscovery
13. Anger Management
14. Historical Reconnection
15. Community Garden Programmes
16. Field Trip Programmes
17. Post-Transition Assistance
18. Off-the-Street Services
19. Housing Services
20. In-House Counselling Services
21. Mobile Counselling Services
22. Street Outreach Services
23. Medical and Mental Health Services
24. Nutritional Services
25. Youth Outreach Services
26. Youth Shelter Services
27. Employment Services
28. Justice Services

First, it is not proposed that this list is complete, but it suggested that this list seems to capture most of the activity areas where Aboriginal shelters do business differently.  Thus, it is a reasonable starting point for future discussions.

Second, some of these titles apply also to mainstream shelter services.  The difference, however, lies in the fundamentally divergent approach of Aboriginal shelters in the areas of activity.

Some services in these areas carry no special costs.  Others assuredly do.  Therefore, if as the federal government communicates, special Aboriginal approaches are needed as a matter of principle, additional funding must be made available.  The problem then becomes how much, to whom, and on what basis – questions that the NHI did not attempt to address in a uniform or scientific manner.  These challenges can be rectified through an intelligently designed national urban Aboriginal shelter funding model which considers regional variations in the actual cost of doing business.

Recommendation 2.1:    The federal government should distinguish between 'ordinary' common costs, and 'special' urban Aboriginal costs, in the building, equipping, and operating of urban Aboriginal shelters, and provide a rational and adequate basis for funding special costs through a national urban Aboriginal shelter funding model.

Recommendation 2.2:    The national funding model should concentrate on ensuring that adequate funding is available for the delivery of special, extra-cost activities which define the character and success of urban Aboriginal shelters.

Recommendation 2.3:    Homelessness and Housing Branch of HRSDC should facilitate research to refine the proposed list of unique aspects of Aboriginal shelters, and to consider the cost implications, with a view towards developing a national funding model.

Recommendation 2.4:    Homelessness and Housing Branch of HRSDC should facilitate stakeholder consultations and buy-in in the development of a national funding model.

The common dream of Aboriginal shelter providers is to have the money needed to offer full transition services to all clients wanting it and ready for it. Many mainstream shelters have no interest in transition services; they offer food and a roof, and leave programming to other agencies. Aboriginal shelters favour a fully integrated approach which emphasises 'transition' above all else.

Recommendation 2.5:    The federal government should, as a matter of clear policy, emphasis the overall importance of transition programming in shelter projects for urban Aboriginal homeless people.

Recommendation 2.6:    Shelters for urban Aboriginal people, which lack an adequate culturally-adapted transition programme, should be financially assisted so they can implement such a programme.

The informants in this Study were uniform in desiring that their shelter develop to the point where it can offer a full range of homelessness services. One informant suggested that Aboriginal shelters should all be assisted to develop to the point where they can offer a "basic grid of mandated services" unmistakably Aboriginal in approach, look, and feel. Most Aboriginal shelters would head in this direction if they could, notwithstanding possible differences of opinion about how to categorise services. The literature contains some discussion of 'factors for success' and 'best practices', but it has little to say about what services would comprise an ideal network of shelter-related, culture-specific services for Aboriginal people in an urban centre. This would be a useful debate and a reference point for planners. From hearing the 'wish lists' of informants, and considering what the often-envied Prince George Native Friendship Centre has accomplished, the Author suggests a ten-point 'basic grid' along these lines:

1. Street patrol: Handing out supplies, medicine, food, clothing, needles, making contact that can result in transition.

2. Referral: Principles of 'everyone is a client' and 'find a bed somewhere for everyone who calls'. One-stop-shopping, for referrals and connections, for Aboriginal people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

3. Meals: Drop-in, residence, and street patrol distribution. When possible merge this with means-on-wheels and other nutrition assistance programmes, to benefit from economies of scale.

4.  <u>Adult emergency shelter</u>:  Separate facilities for men and women.

5.  <u>Youth shelter</u>:  Safe haven, drop-in, emergency overnight, and street outreach.

6.  <u>Transition</u>: Men, women, children, and women *and men* with children.

7.  <u>Healing</u>:  Mainly in relation to addictions counselling, abuse counselling, etc.

8.  <u>Life skills</u>: Basic personal care, social skills, cooking, budgeting, parenting skills, etc.

9.  <u>Prevention services</u>:  Services such as food bank, clothing bank, affordable housing assistance.

10. <u>Community and cultural reconnection</u>.  As the name implies.

This list of ten is proposed merely as a starting point for discussion.

Sometimes competent and culturally sensitive partner agencies exist which can offer specialised services in support of urban Aboriginal shelters.  In such cases, it may not be economic for an Aboriginal shelter to duplicate these services.  A 'basic grid of mandated services' might be a partnership whose services to Aboriginal people are consistently tailored and co-ordinated.  It is proposed that the idea of a 'basic grid of mandated services" be examined more closely:

<u>Recommendation 2.7</u>:    Human Resources and Social Development Canada should facilitate research and consultations to develop a concept of 'basic grid of mandated services' in an urban centre, and to explore the policy and funding implications associated with it.

## Recommendations Further to Observation #3

**The National Homelessness Initiative did not acknowledge that the provision of ongoing funding, for urban Aboriginal shelters, is a necessary and appropriate role for the federal government; this created conditions contrary to sound management, accountability, and programme impacts.**

The experiences gained, under the NHI, demonstrate that the federal homelessness initiative should view mainstream and Aboriginal 'sustainability' differently. This makes good sense from a programme and financial management perspective. It also corresponds to a more appropriate role for the federal government in the urban Aboriginal context. This view is widely held by the informants in this Study.

One must be realistic. It is unlikely that the next two years – the span of the HPS - will see meaningful improvements in the ability of Aboriginal shelter providers to diversify their funding sources away from core reliance on federal funding. It is also even more unlikely that the demand for shelter will decline. Abandonment of funding these shelters, by the federal government, would certainly cause further loss of infrastructure and throw into question the use of public funds over the lifetime of federal homelessness initiatives. An unknown but significant number of shelters were folded, downscaled, or mothballed over the duration of the former NHI, when further federal was unobtainable. It is difficult to imagine how further contractions and project failures could be justified to auditors and parliamentary scrutinisers.

Success has been gauged by the number of programmes and shelters started with federal assistance ('building capacity'), and later by indicators such as the number of persons assisted. Failures and inefficiencies were captured infrequently and not in penetrating detail. Indeed, reductions and closures of shelters generally occurred after federal contribution agreements had ended and federal monitoring had ceased, so they tended to go unreported in federal circles. This legacy of troubled projects, and the prospect of a 'mass extinction' in the first quarter of fiscal year 2006/07, proved compelling arguments for continuing to fund existing projects. The same prospect, for 2008/09, is good reason to more fundamentally revisit 'sustainability' expectations at least in the Aboriginal context.

Between December 2006 and April 2007, many statements were made by officials to the effect that organisations currently receiving funding would continue to receive funding. The recently released conditions of the new HPS give truth to these assurances, although the extent to which the need for continuity funding will be addressed remains to be seen. As this is being written, Aboriginal shelter providers again scrambled to develop new 'sustainability plans' so they could get rubber-stamp approval for the federal money needed to keep their doors open. Once again they must engage in time-consuming paper exercises to obtain what amounts to a minimum level of core funding from an initiative which, on the surface, does not fund ongoing operations.

This is nonetheless a step in the right direction. The federal government has got itself in the Aboriginal shelter business for the long haul, but for legal points of principle it is reluctant to acknowledge this fact and administer the activity in the most effective and accountable strategic manner. There is not however, yet, any indication that the federal government will establish a formal urban Aboriginal homelessness programme which provides ongoing funding to support existing projects, and supports new projects. The transformation from an Aboriginal 'initiative' or 'strategy' to an Aboriginal 'programme' is the key to success long-term success:

Recommendation 3.1:    The Aboriginal components of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy should evolve from a fixed duration 'strategy' to an Aboriginal-specific 'programme' with no sunset date, and which recognises that providing predictable 'sustainability' funding is an appropriate role for the federal government.

Aboriginal shelter providers are strongly, if not universally, supportive of such a transformation.  The merits of such a transformation include the following.

i.      This transformation makes the most sense in terms of accountability and effectiveness. It is difficult to justify, in these terms, the continuation of the status quo.

ii.     This transformation would be very well received by provinces, municipalities, and Aboriginal organisations alike.  These stakeholders invariably welcome federal measures which convey assurance that they will not be left paying for federal costs. Such assurances may, in fact, remove some of their reluctance to contribute financially to urban Aboriginal shelters.

iii.    This transformation need not be an admission of federal legal responsibility, although this would be an option especially if a specific legislative basis were to be enacted. Furthermore, no 'programme' is written in stone and Aboriginal 'programmes' have come and go according to need.  "Programme" in this sense is simply a more organised, semi-permanent activity better able to address strategic needs.

iv.     This transformation into a 'programme' does not create inequities between mainstream and Aboriginal homelessness funding.  Numerous special programmes are directed at Aboriginal people – including ones off-reserve like Non-Insured Health Benefits – which have as their goal the amelioration of social inequities.  If this is 'positive discrimination', then it is justified under s.15(2) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

v.      This transformation could be accommodated within the current envelope for support to homelessness projects.

vi.     The Social Union[56] allows the federal government to continue, or to unilaterally develop and implement, social programmes which provide funding directly to individuals and organisations.  Programmes which require P/T participation (i.e.,

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a signed agreement) are disallowed unless developed with, and agreeable to, the P/T governments; no such formal partnership is required in the case of an Aboriginal homelessness programme.

vii.     This transformation would fit with the new Government's special interest in off-reserve Aboriginal issues and reflect the new Government's messages about 'taking responsibility'.[57]

It is fair to state that omnipresent disputes between federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, over responsibility to fund urban Aboriginal shelter programmes, have severely limited the spread, growth, and financial security of urban Aboriginal shelters.  There is clearly a need for A/F/P/T agreements to clarify the orders of government responsible for funding urban Aboriginal shelters.

Officials have indicated that the present Government recognises a need for formal and effective agreements with provinces and territories, at least about homelessness funding generally.  This is a policy aspect of the new HPS.  Yet it would be unrealistic to expect the provinces and territories to suddenly reverse decades of policy by agreeing to cost-share urban Aboriginal shelters – particularly without guarantees of a lot more money.  The historical concerns of provincial and territorial governments, over financial entrapment, would have to be addressed as a precondition.  To think otherwise is to have a poor understanding of intergovernmental fiscal relations over Aboriginal programmes since the defining year of 1964.  Nonetheless, intergovernmental agreements on funding urban Aboriginal shelters are still possible if the federal government displays leadership in this area:

Recommendation 3.2:     The federal government should propose intergovernmental agreements specific clarifying to the funding of urban Aboriginal shelters, in conjunction with a permanent federal Aboriginal homelessness programme to assist with core funding and assurances to allay provincial and territorial fears of eventual financial entrapment.

The above recommendation for intergovernmental agreements is not intended as a means to transfer (viz., 'offload' or 'download') federal responsibilities.  Few if any urban Aboriginal shelter providers or political organisations would support agreements which did this.  Many informants in this Study mentioned offloading through agreements as one of their special fears.  Difficulties in working with designated SCPI communities have deepened Aboriginal concerns that central provincial, territorial, or municipal administration or disbursement of Aboriginal homelessness funding would be bad for Aboriginal shelters.

Recommendation 3.3:    Intergovernmental agreements on responsibility for funding urban Aboriginal shelters should clearly not involve transfer of federal administrative or funding responsibilities to provincial, territorial, or municipal levels of government.

## Recommendations Further to Observation #4

**The former National Homelessness Initiative incorrectly assumed a level playing field in the abilities of mainstream and Aboriginal shelters to support themselves with funding other than federal government; yet urban Aboriginal shelters are systemically and significantly disadvantaged in their attempts to obtain non-federal funding, especially to pay for special programme activities designated 'Aboriginal'.**

The former National Homelessness Initiative assumed a level playing field in the abilities of mainstream and urban Aboriginal shelters to support themselves with funding obtained from non-federal sources.  Experience shows that many mainstream shelters can survive without federal funding but few if any Aboriginal shelters can survive without it.  While racism, discrimination, and misinformation play a role in this comparative inability to raise revenues, the problem is also a deeply entrenched consequence of chronically strained intergovernmental relationships.  The assumption of a level playing field has now been proved incorrect, not by this Study, but by half a dozen years of unsuccessful attempts by Aboriginal shelters to sufficiently diversify their funding base.  The question now is whether the federal government will learn from this failed experiment or continue as before.

The Author resisted the notion of collecting and tallying-up the financial wish-lists of existing Aboriginal shelters.  Federal officials have been doing this over the past several months, as they find ways to rationalise 2007/08 continuity funding without appearing to be have set aside the notion of 'sustainability'.  This approach can be criticised on many levels: failure to learn from experience, lack of scientific basis in distributing funding, lack of strategic vision about addressing actual need, questions of accountability for public funds, lack of clarity over who is responsible for result; the list goes on.

The new HPS may also support some welcome expansion of the urban Aboriginal shelter network.  Yet this expansion will create more of the same 'sustainability' problems unless fundamental policy and administrative changes occur at federal level.  The federal government can continue to fund Aboriginal shelter on a recurring 'project basis' when the main problem is a structural inability to raise revenues to cover operations.  If so, it will be hard to justify having, in a couple of years, more Aboriginal shelters that are just as dependent on federal funding to survive.

The urban Aboriginal shelters who participated in this Study were eager to state their financial needs in terms of money and policy changes. Their periodic fiscal crises and chronic shortfalls are mainly in the area of core funding, variously called 'programming' and 'O&M'. The funding of capital construction and renovations comprise an additional, and so far more manageable, set of challenges. Urban Aboriginal shelters have had to cannibalise funding for capital purposes to sustain core operations. This would not be necessary under a better-designed funding regime.

Budgetary cannibalisation, when it has occurred, has been about survival not growth. Funding constraints mean that all urban Aboriginal shelters provide a service level below what they would like. Growth has occurred here and there, but most urban Aboriginal shelters are far from a 'basic grid of mandated services'. Some failed to develop services that were originally planned, and to be sure, some shelters exist as a shell with practically no services other than room and board. The service which is the most difficult to find money for, and which shelters consider especially important, is transition. The Author is unaware of cost-benefit analysis that might explain the potential benefits of federal investments in transition services. Even so, the absence of ongoing federal supports, for transition services, seems mistaken. This is the only shelter service that focuses on putting homeless people back into productive society. No other shelter service has fair potential to offset government costs in other programme areas.

This brings us back to the desirability of a dedicated Aboriginal homelessness programme as opposed to recurring project-based 'initiatives' or 'strategies'. There is little point in transforming the HPS into a 'programme' without addressing the funding needs of Aboriginal shelters in a more systematic way. This strongly suggests establishing separate funds for the three areas of need consistently identified by Aboriginal shelters:

Recommendation 4.1:   A sound, effective, and accountable basis for future Aboriginal homelessness funding would have three Aboriginal-specific financial pillars:

1.   Shelter capital construction and renovation fund with no sunset;

2.   Shelter core funding programme with no sunset; and

3.   Shelter transition programme fund with no sunset.

Funding rules would have to be developed so that these funds could be accessed on the basis of demonstrated need. Reasonable determinants of need could be developed and incorporated into the proposed national funding model. The alternative is to continue 'throwing' one-time money at projects whose proponents write winning proposals.

Urban Aboriginal shelters have many complaints about insufficient co-ordination at federal level: conflicting funding conditions, delays due to different funding agreement start and end dates, separate reporting processes, etc.  The present Government views problems such as these as indicators of too little 'horizontality' of federal effort; this term actually features in the Ts&Cs of the HPS.  The most effective way to address these problems, in regards to Aboriginal shelter funding, is to radically streamline the system of funding agreements:

Recommendation 4.2:      Direct federal funding of Aboriginal shelters should be through a single funding agreement covering three Aboriginal-specific financial pillars (capital construction and renovation, core operations, and transition services).

Recommendation 4.3:      The single funding agreement should conform to the practice, common in agreements with departments such as INAC, of having a five-year duration at the end of which another agreement might be negotiated.

Recommendation 4.4:      The single funding agreement should follow the practice, originated at INAC, of allowing recipients to manage their priorities by moving money between envelopes, and allow them to carry over unexpended funds at the end of the fiscal year provided these are re-invested in shelter activities.

Recommendation 4.5:      With a view towards accountability, measuring programme impacts, and justifying continued federal investments in urban Aboriginal shelter programmes, the single funding agreement should:

1. Require recipients to use the HIFIS reporting system and submit HIFIS regular reports.

2. Provide financial assistance to offset the staff time required to provide this reporting; and

3. Clarify that the HIFIS information submitted will be publicly available for purposes of accountability, research, and planning.

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It is difficult to imagine how a high degree of federal horizontality can be achieved through single funding agreements unless one agency is responsible for their co-ordination and preparation. The following is therefore proposed:

Recommendation 4.6: Aboriginal-specific homelessness funding should be accessed through one agency along single-window principles, and delivered through a single funding agreement negotiated with this agency:

1. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of this being an arm's length, apolitical Aboriginal agency with established credibility, competence, and track record;

2. To the maximum extent possible, responsibility for results should be concentrated in this agency; and

3. This agency would be responsible to produce an annual report on Aboriginal homelessness in Canada, which would examine measures of success and failure as experienced by urban Aboriginal shelters.

It is inappropriate to leave the issue of horizontality without addressing a gap that exists in co-ordination and networking between Aboriginal shelter providers. The absence of this was a factor in the NAFC – the most centrally positioned of the stakeholders – receiving funding to facilitate this Study. Some of the informants in this Study suggested a national clearing house specific to urban Aboriginal homelessness. The desirability of a low-cost project of this type is hard to dispute:

Recommendation 4.7: The federal government should designate and fund an existing Aboriginal organisation to act as a national clearing house on Aboriginal homelessness.

1. This should be an apolitical Aboriginal non-governmental organisation with established credibility, competence, and track record in delivering programmes;

2. This clearing house would foremost be a co-ordinating body responsible to urban Aboriginal homeless shelters, ensuring regular exchange of information and experience, and facilitating quarterly meetings of shelters representatives to discuss developments and best practices.

3.  This clearing house would maintain a website with links to stakeholders and partners, downloadable research and policy documents, and bring attention to new developments.

4.  This clearing house could undertake research of its own on a project-by-project funded basis, eventually taking over this responsibility from the federal government.

We return to the question of how to determine total financial needs of urban Aboriginal shelters.  The Author resists making the tired suggestion that the federal government should increase its homelessness funding.  Calls of this nature are frequent.  They usually ring hollow and often smack of partisanship.  More important, they fail to recognise the reality that the federal government cannot make large investments without increasing taxes, significantly changing the tax structure, reducing the bureaucracy, or reducing some other programme.  None of these appear to be likely at the present time.  Therefore, a more realistic suggestion is to make better use of the total envelope that is, and is likely to be, available for homelessness.  This means reconsidering the balance of general and Aboriginal-specific homelessness funding.

There is good reason to do so.  Aboriginal shelters need additional funding to cover costs of culture-sensitive services which allow them to reach, and 'transition', people that mainstream shelters cannot.  Aboriginal shelters are systemically disadvantaged in their attempts to lever money from non-federal sources.  Aboriginal people are over-represented in urban homeless populations and, many would agree, this makes a good case for more and larger Aboriginal shelter programmes.  The Author therefore recommends adjusting the balance of mainstream and Aboriginal funding in a fair and objective manner:

Recommendation 4.8:    Recognising disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in urban homeless populations, the benefits of Aboriginal-designed and delivered shelter programmes, and the greater challenges faced by  Aboriginal shelters in obtaining revenues, the balance of mainstream and Aboriginal-specific shelter funding should be adjusted as follows:

1.  A greater expectation of initial and eventual self-sufficiency would be placed on mainstream shelters;

2.  The increased expectation would be reflected in growth of the Aboriginal-specific portion of federal homelessness funding;

3. The proportional adjustment would be incremental and annual, at a modest figure of approximately 2%, to avoid fiscal shocks to mainstream shelters and to not outpace the rate at which the system of Aboriginal shelters can realistically expand; and

4. The adjustment would be complete when a target percentage – which must be developed based on further analysis of need – has been met; meanwhile it is recommended that 10% rebalancing over five years be an interim target.

## Recommendations Further to Observation #5

**An emerging political competition for control of urban Aboriginal shelter delivery poses real and significant risk to the present fragile and partial collection of Aboriginal shelter programmes.**

Political debate, over who should deliver and control services to urban Aboriginal peoples, continues unabated. How it will play out is a matter of speculation.  What is certain is that the present collection of Aboriginal shelter programmes is sporadic in distribution and pre-occupied with fundraising and cashflow, often at the expense of core business and growth.  This collection of shelters is fragile and on the verge of financial viability - A risky situation for all stakeholders.

It is hard to imagine the federal government directly or indirectly buy into the struggle for political control of urban Aboriginal programmes.  First, it is difficult to see merits in changing a mode of service delivery – by culture-sensitive but race-blind Aboriginal NGOs - that works and provides building blocks for expansion.  Second, it is hard to show that shelters controlled by political organisations would offer better services than already available through Aboriginal shelters run on apolitical lines.  Third, one cannot overlook the risks to existing shelter programmes and established relations between service populations and stakeholders.

Ultimately, the investment risks and value-for-money risks to the Crown would be very difficult to justify if the NHI's successor permits the politicisation of the urban Aboriginal shelters.  On a positive note, the politicisation of these shelters has not begun, and the risks are easily mitigated through simple funding conditions:

Recommendation 5.1:    The federal homelessness initiative should only fund urban Aboriginal shelters which are explicitly open to all Aboriginal homeless people, while encouraging these shelters to tailor their programming to meet the diverse needs of specific groups within their clienteles.

Recommendation 5.2:    Political, lobby, and governmental organisations should ineligible for federal urban Aboriginal homelessness funding, excepting instances of urban self-government which may arise from treaty negotiations.

Recommendation 5.3:    The recipients of federal urban Aboriginal homelessness funding should be service delivery organisations, established as societies or charitable institutions, and with governance boards reflecting the diversity of the service population.

Many federal officials share these concerns.  It would not be a stretch to suggest that these caveats already operate on an unofficial level.  It is now time to focus efforts and allay fears by making these caveats open public policy.

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Any discussion, on the needs of urban Aboriginal shelters, must refer to the federal initiatives key to their creation and survival.  Very few urban Aboriginal shelters for homeless people existed before the financial contributions of the federal National Homelessness Initiative.  The Author is aware of only one (Na-me-res Native Men's Residence in Toronto) but there may be a handful of others.  This situation began to change following a 16 December 1999 federal Cabinet decision which authorised a three-year federal 'demonstration initiative' intended to contribute to reducing homelessness, which by then had emerged as a serious social problem.

Not wanting to be permanently in the business of supporting homelessness initiatives, which from the federal perspective are shared fiscal responsibility, the Government established the NHI not as a permanent programme but as a three-year 'initiative' with a $753 million allocation.  The original NHI had seven components with varying degrees of relevance to Aboriginal shelter programmes:

**Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)**.  A new initiative put under a new National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH) at Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), later Human Resources and Social Development Canada or HRSDC.  SCPI's main feature was to fund designated urban 'communities' who would distribute homelessness funding according to local priorities subject to a proposal process.  These communities could fund Aboriginal projects if they chose to do so.  Quebec, resistant to a direct federal role, insisted on a special agreement clarifying the federal role and providing $56.7 million for Quebec homelessness projects.  In other provinces, the federal government has no restrictions on how it recognises and deals with SCPI communities.[58]

**Youth Employment Strategy (YES**).  This HRDC initiative channelled funds targeted to homeless youth.

**Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programme (RRAP) and the Shelter Enhancement Programme (SEP)**.  Existing programmes of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) which received additional funding for low income persons, including persons who are homeless and at risk of being so.  The existing programmes were changed to include a new Conversion RRAP component more relevant to shelters, while SEP was broadened to include youth victims of family violence.

**Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)**.  This component, delivered by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) made surplus federal properties available to communities for homelessness related projects.

**Research and Accountability Component**.  For Aboriginal shelters, the main feature of this was $3.5 million support research activities in homelessness in Canada.  The present Study was funded through a subsequent iteration of this research funding.

**Aboriginal Homelessness Component**.  This initially involved $59 million channelled to Aboriginal communities[59] through the existing Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), overseen by the Privy Council Office's Aboriginal Affairs unit although implemented through the NSH.  The UAS brought together federal departments through regional councils of senior federal officials; how well these functioned in the urban Aboriginal context would become debatable.[60]

After three years, it was clear that the NHI had been the catalyst for substantial improvements in the services available to homeless people across Canada.  The initial investments were mostly directed towards new and existing emergency shelters, upgrades and renovations, and augmenting support services and facilities such as food and furniture banks.  The evaluation of these first three years pointed to systemic challenges, which contributed to a paucity of planning and logic in the balance and distribution of SCPI funding meant for Aboriginal projects:

> These results show that in three of the twenty communities examined, Aboriginal Homelessness funds have been spent without the benefit of the type of planning that has characterized spending under the SCPI. In three others, the Aboriginal community was part of the mainstream community planning but did not conduct any significant planning of its own to feed into the mainstream plan.  In one other community, Aboriginal planning was conducted very late in the second year of the Initiative, and collaboration with mainstream planners was weak. By the end of the evaluation period, Aboriginal populations in the other eleven communities with a significant Aboriginal population were choosing their projects in accordance with some existing plan.  The evaluation was not able to find a clear pattern as to why some Aboriginal communities have been able to work successfully with the overall community, while others have not. Factors such as size of community, progress of mainstream homelessness planning, and relative size of Aboriginal community do not explain the differences.  Even the three communities with no significant Aboriginal planning included one 80% community, a smaller community in the West with a sizeable Aboriginal population, and a smaller Maritime community.[61]

The evaluators were unable to find a clear pattern why some Aboriginal communities could work with the designated SCPI community while others could not.  In fact, as informants in the present Study explained, the problem was equally that designated SCPI communities had trouble working with Aboriginal communities, and some SCPI communities simply refused to fund projects specific to Aboriginal homeless people.  The point here is that challenges perpetuated in the Homelessness Partnering Strategy of 2007 date to the introduction of SCPI in 1999.

The separate Aboriginal funding stream of the original NHI got off to a bad start.  The 2003 evaluation concluded that the Aboriginal stream was delayed in its implementation due to the mistake of initially delivering the funding through Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs):

> Under the terms of those agreements, only Aboriginal homelessness projects with an employment focus could be funded. This limitation was resolved in the second year of the Initiative with a change in Aboriginal Homelessness terms and conditions, providing more flexibility to allow non-employment-related

projects to be approved.  However, this change in terms and conditions also meant that planning had to be undertaken by Aboriginal communities, very late in the three-year cycle, without dedicated planning funds. The impact of the resulting delays was that only 20% of Aboriginal Homelessness project funds had been allocated by July 2002, as compared to 85% of SCPI project funds. The delays also meant that the types of projects that could realistically be developed would be limited by the time remaining in the initiative…This indicates that the delays in implementing the Aboriginal Homelessness component, and the restrictive terms and conditions, have had negative consequences for the implementation of homelessness projects under this funding stream.[62]

Informants in the present Study stated that there has never been a full recovery owing to systemic problems which remain in the terms and conditions associated with NHI funding generally.  Note that the second phase (2003-2006) evaluation of the former FHI has not yet (March 2007) been completed, so it is not possible to cite audit observations on the NHI in the period preceding its transformation into the HPS.

Notwithstanding challenges which the NHI's initial evaluation brought to light, in 2002 the Government of the day extended the NHI for a further three years (2003-2006) with $258 million allocated to SCPI, the largest component.  The renewed NHI's Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH) component was allocated $45 million. The UAH funding was made available to both SCPI funded and non-SCPI funded communities.  This created, as informants will relate in their words, a situation in which 'Aboriginal' funding was received by non-Aboriginal shelters with Aboriginal clients, for purposes appropriate and inappropriate.

In early 2006, the newly elected Conservative Government, faced with the prospect of many shelters closing their doors, quickly extended the NHI by a further year.  The present Study was conceived in the Autumn of 2006 when it was uncertain whether the federal homelessness initiative would be further extended after the 31 March 2007 sunset.  The NAFC accepted a suggestion that it facilitate the present Study in large measure because it thought that a presentation, of Aboriginal shelter needs, would help demonstrate a continuing requirement for a homelessness initiative at least in the Aboriginal context.

In any event, a further two-year continuation of funding, for a federal homelessness initiative was announced on 19 December 2006 by the Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.  The federal homelessness initiative was to continue, in modified form, as the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) at the existing funding level ($270 million over two years).  The new HPS is aimed at combating homelessness in communities across Canada and extending CMHC's renovation programmes.

However, the new Ts&Cs had to be developed with a sense of urgency because, without them, certain shelters would have closed their doors on 1 April 2007.  The new HPS accordingly reflects its predecessor in many respects.  The goals of this Study's stakeholders then shifted to influencing a more fundamental, strategic re-assessment of the federal role in the 'homelessness business' expected to follow a Memorandum to Cabinet in 2008.

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## Limitations upon the Methodology

From the outset, it was realised that the main determinant of the scope of the Study was absence of an "Aboriginal shelter movement" and lack of a locus of co-ordination for Aboriginal shelters. There as, and remains, no interest group representing Aboriginal shelters and knowledgeable of their special circumstances. This made it necessary to obtain information from visits to independent and widely scattered Aboriginal shelters.

The number of urban shelters which are Aboriginal-run, Aboriginal-specific, or have a dedicated Aboriginal programme is small. The best guess of the NAFC, whose regional affiliates appeared to operate most of these shelters, was under twenty and possibly just a dozen. The vast majority of urban Aboriginal homeless people receive emergency shelter – when such shelter is available – from non-Aboriginal providers. The number of urban Aboriginal organisations, which provide services other than shelter to Aboriginal homeless people, is larger than the number of Aboriginal shelters but still relatively small.

A further limitation, which became apparent, is that the federal homelessness initiative is unable to provide lists of Aboriginal homelessness programmes or even contact people. Reasons relating to privacy and confidentiality, which sometimes appear to be reflected in funding agreements, limited the help available from the federal government in planning how to proceed with the project. Additionally, HRSDC was unable to provide a list of Aboriginal shelters or mainstream shelters with an Aboriginal programme or clientele; its inability to furnish this kind of information is, in fact, reflected in HRSDC's reasons to fund the NAFC to undertake this Study.

Readers may wonder why the federal government has not taken a strong co-ordination role in regards to urban Aboriginal shelters. This question arises if only because the decentralised manner, in which projects received federal homelessness funding, has hindered or at least not supported an over-arching approach to Aboriginal homelessness. The federal role can be understood by the fact that the federal government does not consider itself legally obligated to provide or co-ordinate any sort of programmes and services to any Aboriginal people on-reserve or off-reserve. Such services or funding as the federal government does furnish are based on policy rather obligation. None of this involvement has a statutory basis other than the *Appropriations Act*. These disputes over jurisdiction comprise long-standing contention between the federal government and the provinces (and they are a necessary topic to explore in the Study).

Although no list of Aboriginal shelters providers could be furnished by the NAFC or by HRSDC, both organisations had a small list of urban Aboriginal organisations providing homelessness services and willing to network as an *ad hoc* Working Group to assist with the project and provide feedback to the Author. This group participated in a think-tank of federal officials and Aboriginal shelter representatives, held 4-6 October 2006 at the Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The Aboriginal shelter participants at this meeting became the *ad hoc* Working Group, which co-ordinated by the NAFC would oversee the project and provide feedback.

The project commenced in early December 2006. The two-week Christmas period, during which federal, NAFC, and shelter officials were generally unavailable, reduced the time during December when data could be gathered. In particular, site visits, during the last two weeks of December, were ruled out for these and weather reasons. It also proved impossible to mobilise the Working Group during this period. The reasons were the same, but also because shelters are exceptionally busy during the stressful, high-demand Christmas season. It was expected that the Working Group would probably be in a position to participate in data collection, but if not, the project was designed so that a useful report would still emerge.

It was correctly anticipated that the busy schedules of the Working Group members would make it extraordinarily difficult to make the Working Group work as such. It proved most difficult to schedule teleconferences that sufficient members could attend at scheduled times. The Author was able to make up for this occasional deficiency through direct communications with informants.

## Key Informant Interviews

The level of co-operation afforded the Author, during his site visits, was complete and greatly appreciated. The management of the case study shelters proved welcoming and eager to answer questions. This enthusiasm translated into comprehensive tours and introductions to personnel and clients. It was soon apparent that there was no point in administering a standardised questionnaire which had been developed for the Study. First, there was insufficient time owing to the eventful tours and explanations provided. Second, to spoil this hospitality would have been disrespectful. Third, and more important, the Author quickly realised that these shelters had ways of doing business which, while undeniably and commonly 'Aboriginal', were quite unique. The Author's approach to field data collection would have to change.

The modified approach is as follows. The Author employed social work client interview techniques when conducting the key informant interviews. The informants were encouraged to explain the operations of their shelter and express their concerns in whatever detail they wished. The informants were invited to start the conversation as they saw fit. After they had had their chance to speak their mind – generally their first priority - the Author focused the conversation by asking ten questions calculated to capture the main points of their perceptions of need:

1. Describe what it is like to try to function as an Aboriginal shelter in a landscape dominated by mainstream shelters.

2. Describe your shelter's experiences working with federal, provincial, and municipal governments?

3.  How much of the local need is your shelter able to meet?

4.  Describe the financial challenges you face.

5.  What is the main distinguishing characteristic that sets you apart from the mainstream shelters?

6.  Describe you clientele and explain any unique characteristics compared with non-Aboriginal homeless people in similar straits.

7.  What are the specifics of how you do business that set you apart from mainstream shelters; i.e., describe unique aspects of your programming.

8.  What are your shelter's needs? (Think beyond dollars that you need to survive)

9.  What are the needs of Aboriginal shelters generally? (Think beyond dollars that Aboriginal shelters need to survive)

10. What messages need to be communicated, especially to 'Ottawa'?

These questions were repeated as necessary when the conversation drifted off topic. The responses were recorded in the Author's notebook in as much detail as possible. Statements considered worth quoting were indicated by quotation marks.

The Author was introduced to far more people than he could possibly interview in a systematic or thorough manner. When time was of the essence, he selected the questions based on the person's role in the organisation, but he always asked Question 10 – "What messages need to be communicated, especially to 'Ottawa'?" The questions asked during telephone conversations were also selected according to this rule.

The informants' statements were woven with other data during the analysis phase of the project. Not all of the recorded statements were used in the Report, either because they would have broadened the analysis impossibly, or because they could not be reasonably corroborated with other informant statements or facts. The informant statements which did not raise interpretational questions were relied on heavily to describe the unique character and needs of Aboriginal shelters. The Author added information from his own readings when necessary to provide a more complete picture.

# Shanawdithit Shelter (St. John's Newfoundland)

**Type of Shelter:**      Multi-purpose emergency and medical transient shelter.

**Clientele:**      Mainly persons experiencing temporary or regular homelessness, but also transients who are in St. John's for medical diagnosis and treatment.

**Population Served:**      Primarily Inuit, Innu, Kablunangajuit, Métis, and Mi'kmaq people from various parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Capacity:**      Maximum 23 persons and families.  Ten bedrooms, two family rooms, and also two rooms for women and children.

**Affiliation:**      Operated by St. John's Native Friendship Centre.

This non-partisan organisation is open to all Aboriginal people, but its main clientele includes Inuit, Innu, Kablunangajuit, Métis, and Mi'kmaq people from various parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.  Persons of any heritage may become a member of the Association, whose 200 members make it a modest operation.  The St. John's Native Friendship Centre was established in 1983.  In 2003 it relocated to the present location and began construction of the shelter as an addition at the back of the building.

Shanawdithit Shelter is named after the last Beothuk, a woman who died in 1829 at the age of 29.  It opened unofficially in September 2003 and officially two months later.  The clientele is mainly homeless people, transient people, and people temporarily in St. John's for medical reasons.  The Shelter has a kitchen, dining room, children's play area, and living room.  These are intended as a "home away from home" and as such are uncommonly successful in terms of design and provisioning.

Shanawdithit Shelter is an extremely modern, well-appointed facility with accommodation standards equal to a decent hotel.  The accessibility features and kitchen facilities are outstanding.  However, this shelter can be described as 'stillborn" because most of its programming has not been implemented due to financial reasons.  There is, for instance, no translation, counselling, life-skills, drug and alcohol, and related programming.  The staff is able to offer little more than local transportation to and from appointments, special diet, and first-rate accommodations in a friendly setting.

## Transition Home Project –
## Brantford Native Housing (Brantford, Ontario)

**Type of Shelter:**       Transition shelter.

**Clientele:**       Homeless Aboriginal women, with or without children.

**Population Served:**       Primarily persons of Six Nations Iroquois descent in the City of Brantford.

**Capacity:**       Maximum 20 persons (20 beds).

**Affiliation:**       Operated by Brantford Native Housing.

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Brantford Native Housing (BNH) is a non-profit charitable corporation in existence for over 20 years. Its main objective is to provide safe, secure and affordable rental homes for urban Natives living in the City of Brantford. Although it offers housing to low-income Status, Non-Status, Métis and Inuit families, most of the clientele are originally from a large Six Nations Iroquois reserve nearby. To be eligible for housing, a minimum of 50% of all family members must be of Native ancestry; this translates into a liberal criterion. Three housing programmes provide subsidised rental units whereby tenants pay rent geared to income (excluding utility costs) for a fully serviced unit. Presently BNH has 129 homes in Brantford with a waiting list of 250.

The BNH Transition Home Project (opened in July 2006) is one of the last shelter projects opened with federal funding under the former National Homelessness Initiative. It opened on 21 June 2006, a few months after the election of the Conservative Government, using funding approved by the previous former government in March 2005. Brantford Native Housing received, from SCPI and UAH, a sum of $371,282 towards the purchase and construction costs of the transitional house and other activities, and CMHC contributed $196,000 under SEP.

This shelter occupies a large converted house with 14 beds in total, but not 14 units. Only women and women with children are accepted. There is no emergency service – clients must go through a selection and approval process. They must be abstinent, willing to participate in programmes, and homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness. The capacity is limited by the mix of rooms and beds; at present the shelter has two families and one individual, but the number can be higher depending on the number of families or singles. At present, one resident mother has *eight* children with her. This shelter has two counselling staff. An additional building is being sought, both to meet need in Brantford and to make maximum use of the existing staff.

*Sheltering Urban Aboriginal Homeless People*

# Infinity House Women's Transition Shelter (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

**Type of Shelter:**   Transition shelter.

**Clientele:**   Aboriginal women with children.

**Population Served:**   Primarily women of First Nation and Métis decent, and First Nation women from reserves account for most of the clients.

**Capacity:**   Sixteen suites, one in use as an office.

**Affiliation:**   Operated by Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.

The Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) is an established provider of various services, including assisted housing, to the large and mobile Aboriginal population of Saskatoon.  Despite its Métis nature, CUMFI provides services to any Aboriginal people and sometimes to others who are in need.  Anyone can become a member of CUMFI.  It has a close relationship with the local Friendship Centre and is on excellent terms with most First Nations organisations whom, one might think, would be competitive.

Infinity House opened in July 2002.  It provides supportive long-term housing for single mothers aged 18-35 and their children (no more than three children per mother, and all children must be under age 16).  However, it has been flexible on the ages owing, for example, to a homeless grandmother with children in need of assistance.

Infinity House operates from a 16-suite apartment building (12 transitional units, three emergency units, with one unit reserved as an office).  Fully furnished, self-contained suites with 24-hour security, and food and clothing will be provided to new residents in dire need.  The maximum length of stay in the emergency units is 8 days, unless an extension is approved by the funding source; in the transitional units, the maximum is 3 years.

The client-mothers must agree to participate in counselling and activities as a condition of stay.  A key aspect of the project is the development of an individual case plan for each client (mandatory for women in long-term stay) and individual "wrap-around" case plan management.  Case plans are particularised to the specific Aboriginal culture of the mother and children.  Residents participate in Métis and First Nation cultural events.

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# Ketso Yoh Men's Shelter
# (Prince George, B.C.)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Type of Shelter:** | Men's Half-way House / Emergency Shelter. |
| **Clientele**: | Homeless and transient Aboriginal men, many recently in conflict with the law and/or requiring light supervision. |
| **Population Served:** | Primarily First Nation people who arrive in Prince George in great numbers, often headed south towards Vancouver, but open to any Aboriginal men. |
| **Capacity:** | 20 beds not including overflow mats. |
| **Affiliation:** | Operated by Prince George Native Friendship Centre. |

**Ketsoh Yo** operates from an old converted hotel.  It is a 24-hour operation providing maximum humanitarian assistance including three meals a day, nightly snacks, bedding, towels, shampoo, disposable razor, comb, shaving cream, toothbrush and toothpaste.  Ketso Yoh goes to great lengths to be distinct from the types of non-Aboriginal shelters who seek to oppress Aboriginal culture and convert Aboriginal people to a particular religion. Consistent with the philosophy of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC), the Ketso Yoh Centre operates in a way that respects the individual's human rights. Fundamental to this is the right of the resident to practise culture and religion in an atmosphere free from threat (it being understood that understanding one's cultural heritage is requisite to developing full personal potential).

Ketso Yoh offers a housing outreach worker, who assists individuals in accessing safe, affordable housing in the community of Prince George.  Ketso Yoh has a good relationship with non-Aboriginal homelessness organisations, including regularly providing them with meals for clients.  All programmes are delivered in a holistic manner and compliment the other areas of service delivery of the PGNFC, a long-established (1969) and large social programme delivery agency.  Note that the PGNFC's main location (a large former government building) has an uncommonly wide and effective range of supports including food bank, clothing bank, children's/maternal supplies, warm-up/drop-in room, and emergency dental clinic.

*Sheltering Urban Aboriginal Homeless People*

# Reconnect Programme, Village Youth Shelter (Prince George, B.C.)

**Type of Shelter:**          Youth shelter.

**Clientele:**          Homeless and at-risk Aboriginal youth.

**Population Served:**          Primarily First Nation people who arrive in Prince George in great numbers, often headed south towards Vancouver, but open to any Aboriginal youth.

**Capacity:**          20 beds: 10 bed co-ed youth shelter, and 10 bed Supported Independent Living Programme (transitional housing).

**Affiliation:**          Operated by Prince George Native Friendship Centre.

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**Reconnect Youth Services**, established in 1989, has recently expended into a major youth shelter operation and intervention entity for children at risk and street-involved youth. Reconnect is operated under contract to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). It is a voluntary youth-centred service offering safe, secure, stable, and nurturing emergency drop-in shelter services and daily integrated service programming to street involved and/or high risk youth. A variety of programming and referral is offered.

In May 2006 a renovated shelter for youth at risk was opened using federal, provincial, and community partner funding. This "Village Youth Shelter" has 20 beds for both emergency shelter and transition housing. Besides 10 emergency shelter beds and 10 second-stage transitional housing units, it provide support with daily living, meals, community resources, social development and employment assistance. The Village is part the Reconnect programme.

In parallel with Reconnect and also under MCFD contract, the PGNFC's Friendship House is a safe house facility for street-involved youth and high-risk children. Since January 2003, it provides 24-hour care to male and female youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years. The programme provides food, shelter, and access/referral to medical, educational, emotional, and recreational resources.

# Appendix D - The Demography of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness

## Understanding this Appendix in Context

This Appendix is meant to convey a sense of the uniqueness and complexity of demography in the context of urban Aboriginal homelessness.  It will become apparent that unique demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and historical factors are behind the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in regional and local homeless populations.  In this respect, demography as a cause of urban Aboriginal homelessness is more than population growth and migration.

## The Problem of Counting Aboriginal Homelessness

Any contemplation of extent and patterns in Aboriginal homelessness must recognise that homelessness exists in multiple forms.  The 2001 report *Aboriginal Homelessness in British Columbia* is one of the few thorough and systematic studies of Aboriginal homelessness in Canada.  Its description of the types of Aboriginal homelessness, and the continuum of risk, is worth quoting at length:

> One of the most useful and popular methods of counting the homeless is through the use of emergency shelter records (through what is called *snapshots* – a point in time).  This approach, however, is somewhat out of place for the Aboriginal Community for several reasons.  First, Aboriginal emergency shelters are practically non-existent.[g]  Second, the approach does not capture the true nature of Aboriginal Homeless Peoples because it fails to consider sub-categories such as: those who "couch surf", those being released from prisons, battered women and transition houses, those being released from hospitals, those in detention centres, those who have no security of tenure but live in inadequate housing (overcrowded or otherwise), and those who alternate between being sheltered and unsheltered.
>
> Third, the approach does not account for people who are at risk of becoming homeless such as: those Aboriginal peoples who must pay more than 25% of their income for rent, those who suffer from family violence and who are unable to leave their abusive situation because of fear of homelessness, those whose incomes are below the Low Income Cut-Off,[h] the mentally ill, and those living on the streets involved in the sex trade.  As a consequence further data collection is required to include these people in an estimate of the number of Aboriginal Homeless Peoples.[63]

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g :   The Aboriginal shelter situation has improved somewhat since 2001, with an increase from almost none to a handful operating in early 2007.

h :   Low income cut-offs (LICOs) are a poverty measure widely-used by Statistics Canada but nonetheless disputed by some free market proponents.  LICOs convey the income level at which a family may be in straitened circumstances because it must spend a greater portion of its income on the basics (food, clothing and shelter) than an average family of similar size.  The LICOs vary by size of family and community. The traditional Statistics Canada LICO definition, and detailed explanations of its derivation, appear in Statistics Canada (1999).

This is not a complete list of categories and risk groups, but it makes the point that we must foremost recognise that homelessness can be visible, hidden, or simply potential or impending. How visible it is depends upon various factors besides the frequency of sightings of, or contacts with, obviously homeless people. Homelessness has *absolute* and *hidden* dimensions. Absolute homeless exists when a person has no address, no home, and no shelter except what might be obtained as temporary relief. Absolute homelessness is the easiest type of homelessness to measure through methods such as surveys, counts, and analysis of shelter caseload statistics. This ease is relative, however, because homeless is by nature a difficult problem to quantify.

To date there have been few attempts to quantify hidden homelessness, a social problem which seems to vary from extremely prevalent in Nunavut[64] to apparently not problematic in some Southern urban areas. Hidden homelessness is generally a problem that the government and charities can ignore. It is not a problem to social services as long as hidden homeless people do not seek (or are not sent for) assistance from shelters and related services. They can generally be ignored so long as they "sleep rough" without making demands for services, or else migrate between temporary accommodations in the homes of sympathetic people. It is not in the interests of government to fund research that may reveal that hidden homelessness is a potentially expensive problem. This is likely the reason why surveys of the hidden homeless are uncommon, and why they appear to be undertaken mainly by NGOs rather than by governments. The 2002 Calgary Homeless Study for the Relatively Homeless (Hidden)[65] is such an example.

Those who reside under stressful conditions in an overcrowded household are also widely considered "hidden homeless" because they ought to have their own accommodation. Measures of residential crowding are often used to identify people living under these conditions. They may indeed be "hidden homeless", but they do have a roof they can regularly sleep under, so they are not absolutely without accommodation. Governments and NGOs are more concerned about absolutely homeless people for whom accommodation, food, etc. must be found. The consequently tend to focus their surveys on absolutely homeless people in concrete need of public or charitable assistance.

For instance, since 2002 the City of Calgary has conducted surveys of its municipal homeless population using the definition that "homeless persons are considered to be those who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose."[66] This survey tends to exclude those among the hidden homeless with the means to avoid being a burden on services. It also excludes transients, such as migrants, who have temporary need of shelter when they are away from home. The methodology used is representative of the methodologies used by municipalities across Canada:

### WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE COUNT?
Since its inception, the count has always included two components – a survey of facilities and service agencies (including social service shelters, women's shelters, hospitals, police services, emergency social services, and outreach and community service providers) and a street count,

in which teams of volunteers canvas specific geographic areas in the city where homeless persons have been observed to reside (including the downtown core and other commercial and residential areas, inner city parks, remote parks and river pathways, and prostitution strolls).

## WHO IS EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT?

Not every homeless person can be enumerated in a census because not everyone who is homeless is "visible." Since the "hidden homeless" tend not to be counted, the actual number of homeless persons reported to be living in any community is always underestimated. The Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary does not have a means to identify and include persons who, on the night of the count, do not have a permanent residence to which they can return if they so choose but, instead, may be "couch surfing" (i.e., staying with friends or family), sleeping in vehicles or abandoned buildings where they would not have been seen, camping in heavily wooded areas that are difficult to search, or living outside of the "observation catchment area" (i.e., the geographic areas that are formally surveyed as part of the street count).[67]

In most cases, and whether or not they wish it so, the funders and providers of shelter and related services find it necessary to focus on the core business of providing services to the most desperate, and most visible, of the urban homeless. Rising caseloads, limited finances, and a cold winter made it seem necessary, in Calgary for example, to limit the 'hidden vs. absolute' debate by formally targeting services towards the 'absolutely homeless'. A Calgary Interagency Committee for the Absolutely Homeless was formed in 1996. In 2003 it commenced on a three-year plan specific to this population cohort.[68]

The present Study is about the needs of Aboriginal shelter providers. These organisations and programmes tend to be acutely aware of, and deeply concerned about, the more insidious varieties of homelessness which affect Aboriginal people. Yet their core business is also about serving the absolutely homeless. These are the people who actually show up in need of assistance, which in turn, requires money, effort, and planning. This is why this Study pays special attention to the meeting the needs of the tangible applicants and clients.

## Demographics of Aboriginal Populations - General

Any discussion of the needs of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters must start with the general topic of the demographics of Aboriginal people in Canada. First, it should be understood that no comprehensive demographic analysis of Aboriginal homelessness has yet been attempted. We can, however, draw many useful inferences from analyses of population growth and migration. The Census suggests that about a million or 3% of Canadians claim Aboriginal ancestry, and that the Aboriginal population cohorts are very significant in the three territories:

Total Populations and Aboriginal Populations of Canada and its Territories[69]

|  | 1 January 2006 | Aboriginal Population 2001 Census | Aboriginal Population as % Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 32,422,919 | 976,305 | 3% |
| Yukon | 31,150 | 6,545 | 21% |
| NWT | 42,526 | 18,725 | 44% |
| Nunavut | 30,245 | 22,720 | 75% |

The various Aboriginal populations tend to grow quicker than non-Aboriginal populations.  Between 1997 and 2005, the overall Aboriginal population grew by about 1.7% annually.  This is slightly higher than the Canadian rate of 1.1%.  The population is projected to grow by 2.3% over the same period.  Projections suggest that the total Registered Indian population could increase by 34%, from about 703,800 in 2001 to slightly less than 940,000 in 2021.

It is widely thought that Canada is experiencing a substantial a net migration of Aboriginal people from reserves, and from rural and remote communities, towards urban centres where they may become homeless.  This idea of a net outflow towards municipalities is contradicted by demographic data.  Migration is not the main factor affecting urban Aboriginal population growth, and substantial migration of Aboriginal people towards rural reserves and rural Aboriginal communities is occurring.[70]  This does not suggest that cities are losing their Aboriginal populations to reserves, but it does point to the comparatively high mobility of Aboriginal people.[i]

Between 1986 and 1991, 60% of Aboriginal people relocated compared to 46% of other Canadians.  The on-reserve population grew by 6.4% owing to migration, but the urban (Census Metropolitan Area or CMA[j]) Aboriginal population increased by just half this amount (3.6 %).  The flow of migration between geographic zones indicates that most migration was in the direction of reserves (9,540 people returned).  Aboriginal migration, to urban centres from rural and suburban areas (non-CMA), is categorised as off-reserve.  This therefore suggests that no net migration from reserves into cities occurred during 1986-1991.  Three facts temper this observation:

First, the Registered Indian population fluctuated considerably between 1986 and 2003 in large part due to a 1985 amendment to the Indian Act known as Bill C-31.  This amendment restored Indian status

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i :    More recent Census data became available after the research and analysis, behind the present Report, had been completed.  It is fair to state that, for policy discussion purposes, this is not problematic; the newer data reflect the general demographic trends and magnitudes discussed in the present Report.

j:    A 'CMA' is an urban centre with more than 100,000 total population.

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to people (particularly women) who had lost it through discriminatory provisions of the previous Act. Bill C-31 caused a one-time influx of returnees which stabilised a half-dozen years ago.

Second, the Registered Indian population is represents only part of the demographic picture. A great many Non-Status Indians, Métis, and Inuit are not captured by these statistics produced by Indian Affairs.

Third, migration aside, the on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginal populations are both growing rapidly.

The number of off-reserve Registered Indians has increased in all regions. Quebec exhibited the lowest rate of increase over the decade 1993-2003. Manitoba saw the largest percentage off-reserve regional gain (south of 60° latitude). The off-reserve population increased steadily between 1983 and 2003 from 98,412 to 309,825. During the same period, the proportion of on-reserve Registered Indians living in rural areas grew from 39% to 44%. In 2003, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Atlantic provinces had the highest proportion of on-reserve Registered Indians in rural areas while Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec had the highest proportion of on-reserve Registered Indians in urban areas.[71]

The picture in cities varies enormously. Some cities are veritable magnets for Aboriginal people of various origins. The Aboriginal populations of others change hardly at all. The extent to which Aboriginal people – recent migrants or long-time residents – are at risk of homelessness also varies greatly in relation to socio-economic factors. (We shall contemplate these variations further when we discuss Aboriginal homelessness patterns.)

Finally, there is good reason to think that the on-reserve population will grow markedly if the net inflow to reserves continues to be maintained. The proportion of Registered Indians on reserves could increase from about 60% in 2001 to almost 75% in 2021. It is difficult, however, to imagine that net on-reserve migration is sustainable. First, the flow of Bill C-31 returnees has dried up. Second, life on many reserves is becoming less and less attractive. Continued backlogs in social housing construction make crowding a common problem. Widespread deficiencies in housing conditions have been linked with elevated social, physical, and medical stresses. Limited funding for basic services (e.g., sanitation, education, and primary health care) make many reserve communities unsatisfactory destinations. Furthermore, population growth continues to be greater than the growth of on-reserve infrastructure, housing, and services. These gaps, between on-reserve and off-reserve services and conditions, are widely acknowledged.[72]

What does this say of the urban Aboriginal homeless situation? Generally speaking, opportunities for education, employment, access to services, and even home ownership have long been significantly better off-reserve than on-reserve. Certain urban centres will continue to attract Aboriginal people for these reasons. Many of these people will continue to arrive in these 'magnet' centres with few assets, and poorly prepared educationally and socially, to adapt and compete in a stressful and often strange urban environment.[73] These are risk factors for

homelessness.  The question now is whether increasing pressures on reserves will reach a point where out-migration becomes the personal option of choice.  This is a reasonable eventual expectation assuming that unprecedented funding injections, and other changes, are not forthcoming.

## Extent of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness - General Considerations

It is unrealistic, in the present Study, to fully analyse the extent of Aboriginal homelessness in urban centres as this homelessness it affects shelters.  A better approach is to present, from the literature, some of the more salient statistics from urban centres of special interest.  This should convey a broad sense of the demand for shelter and related services from the overall urban Aboriginal population.

First is the question of how big is the overall homeless population in Canada.  The answer is that there have been few studies into this question, and there is not yet any particularly credible estimate.  The Canadian Council on Social Development made the first attempt to estimate the homeless population in 1987.[74]  That study estimated that 130,000 to 250,000 people were homeless in Canada.  The survey proved to be most disappointing.  The methodological criticisms included low response by participant agencies, failure to include known homeless who were not staying in shelters during the particular survey evening, and reliance only on service providers for the data.  Statistics Canada repeated the methodology (a one-day survey of 90 soup kitchens in 16 cities) during the 1991 Census.  Statistics Canada was so unsure of the results that it was reluctant to release them.  We are still waiting for a national estimate that can be used confidently.

We do, however, have broad consensus that the number of homeless people in Canada has been rising since the 1980s, and in some areas the growth is known from solid research to be alarming.  Numerous studies also show that the demographics of the homeless populations are changing from city to city, and region to region.  The homeless population is also becoming increasing diversified in terms of demographic characteristics of individuals.  The old popular images of the migrant Depression era 'tramp', and the scruffy, the down-and-out male 'wino' on the sidewalk, and the lazy drunk Indian who should be on his reserve, still persist in the minds of many Canadians.  The statistics paint a much different overall picture.  Across North America, we see that "the homeless population includes a large and growing number of women, youth, families, mentally disturbed people, new immigrants, and members of various ethnic communities; in Canada, it includes many Aboriginal people."[75]  While the balance of characteristics varies from place to place, it is obvious Canada's homeless population now includes women, women victims of spousal violence, children, teenaged youths, the mentally ill, newly arrived immigrants, refugees, persons recently released from prison, and casual workers.[76]

It is abundantly clear that Aboriginal people frequently account for a disproportionate number of the homeless people in urban centres.  This is accepted fact in the trustworthy literature.  A credible researcher has estimated that Aboriginal people are over-represented in Canada's overall homeless population by a factor of about ten.[77]  While this over-representation varies greatly, it always seems to be elevated and in many instances it is quite extreme.  Consider that, a decade ago (1996), "Individuals of Aboriginal origin accounted for 35% of the homeless population in Edmonton, 18% in Calgary, 11% in Vancouver, and 5% in Toronto, but only 3.5%, 1.9%, 1.7% and 0.4% of the general population of these cities respectively."[78]

## Extent of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness – British Columbia

Let us start with a Vancouver survey, of 60 downtown homeless women, that was conducted thirteen years earlier when the statistical knowledge of urban homelessness was much less than today.  That 1994 survey suggested that 50% of the homeless women were Aboriginal.[79]  That study was instrumental in raising awareness about significant numbers of Aboriginal women suspected of 'vanishing' on Vancouver's streets, and particularly into its sex trade.

A more recent (2005) study of homelessness in Vancouver which determined that, based on absolute homeless people who could be identified and surveyed:

- The number of homeless counted region-wide almost doubled from 1,121 persons in 2002 to 2,174 persons in 2005, and the number of street homeless grew by 235% or 800 persons over the same period.

- Aboriginal people were over-represented (30% vs. 2% of the general population).

- There were proportionally more women among the Aboriginal homeless population (35%) than the non-Aboriginal homeless population (27%).

- The number and share of Aboriginal people was highest among the street homeless (357 people or 34% of total street homeless) and smallest among the sheltered homeless (158 people or 23% of the total sheltered homeless).[80]

Another Vancouver study, a year later (2006), confirmed that Aboriginal people were over-represented in Vancouver's West End.  The proportion of self-identified Aboriginal West End respondents rose from 25% in 2005 to one-third in 2006.[81]  In 2004 it was estimated that 25% of street homeless people in Vancouver were

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Aboriginal.[82]  Two years earlier, it was estimated that that 43% of Vancouver's Aboriginal street homeless had been homeless longer than 6 months.

The study of Aboriginal homelessness is more advanced in British Columbia than in many regions of the country.[83]  A comprehensive 2001 study of homelessness in British Columbia summarised the situation thus:

> People of Aboriginal ethnicity made up 19 per cent of all British Columbia shelter clients included in the snapshot on November 19th [1999].  This compares to between 3 per cent and 4 per cent of the British Columbia population as a whole, so that they are over-represented among those using shelters.  This is despite the fact that Aboriginal people are less likely to access non-Aboriginal operated shelters…Aboriginal clients are more likely to be female (41 per cent), families with children (17 per cent), and under age 24 (33 per cent) than other British Columbia clients.  'Substance misuse' and 'out of funds' are the most common reasons for admission to shelter.  Substance misuse as a health condition is more prevalent among this subgroup (43 per cent) than among the entire shelter client population (32 per cent).[84]

Another 2001 study estimated, using the LICO as a risk threshold, that a remarkably high 41% of British Columbia's off-reserve Aboriginal population was homeless or at-risk of being homeless.  This same study estimated that a maximum of 41,707 of off-reserve Aboriginal people were homeless.  It calculated the number of absolutely homeless at 23,295 on the basis that these people had no reported income at all.  Furthermore, 22.9% of off-reserve Aboriginal people reported incomes under $2,000, a percentage closely resembling the best estimate of the Aboriginal percentage of emergency shelter users.[85]

## Extent of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness – The Prairie Provinces

Let us now consider the high-growth City of Calgary.  The present oil-related economic boom in Alberta makes Calgary an extreme 'magnet' for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike.  The Census records that Metropolitan Calgary's population grew 25.8% between 1996 and 2005.[86]  Calgary's extreme growth caused it to become, in July 2006, the third city in Canada to reach the million mark, after Toronto and Montreal; Vancouver has around 600,000 people.

The estimates of Calgary's homeless population vary greatly.  The highest seems to be a 1989 estimate of between 5,000 and 7,000 people.[87]  This figure has been considered excessive and the methodology employed has been doubted.  Other subsequent surveys have produced lower numbers with greater consensus over accuracy.  A 1996 survey  reported that, of 615 homeless people surveyed on one day, 20% were Aboriginal, 74% were Caucasian, 3% were Black, and 3% were Asiatic.[88]  One year later a snapshot survey of

250 homeless people showed 22% Aboriginal, 72% Caucasian, and 6% 'other'.[89]  Six years later, Aboriginal representation was recorded at a much higher (35.3% vs. 22%) figure, matching the 1999 Edmonton estimate of 35%.[90]  The 2002 Calgary study is especially interesting owing to its stratified nature; it made a particular effort to avoid excluding women, seniors and aboriginal persons, and thus it is more representative than its 1997 Calgary predecessor.

One can always debate methodological minutiae but it is unlikely that the 2002 Calgary survey under-reports any groups in its sample.  The 2002 Calgary survey is consistent with key general trends.  Among these is that "single men constitute the largest segment of homeless people in most Canadian cities: about 70% of the homeless population in Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary."[91]  The Calgary study also reflects the broader emerging patterns of higher than anticipated or rising homelessness among women, the elderly, and Aboriginal people generally:

### 1997 vs. 2002 Basic Respondent Demographics, 2002 Calgary Homelessness Survey[92]

| Demographic Characteristic | 1997 Survey (N = 250) | 2002 Stratified Survey Sample (N = 309) |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| • Male | 82% | 72.5% |
| • Female | 18% | 27.5% |
| Age Group | | |
| • 24 years or less | 25% | 24.3% |
| • 25-54 | 71% | 56.7% |
| • 55+ | 4% | 19% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| • Caucasian | 72% | 58% |
| • Aboriginal | 22% | 35.3% |
| • Other | 6% | 6.7% |

The 2002 Calgary survey is significant in attempting to compare the extent of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal absolute homelessness and a form of hidden homelessness it terms 'relative':

Relative homelessness refers to people living in spaces that do not meet the basic health and safety standards including:

1. Protection from the elements;
2. Access to safe water and sanitation;
3. Security of tenure and personal safety;
4. Affordability;
5. Access to employment, education and health care;
6. Provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding.

The 2002 Calgary survey recorded 239 Aboriginal absolute homeless and 71 Aboriginal relative homeless, the latter representing 23% of the total. This may or may not be an under-estimate of Calgary's Aboriginal relative homeless, but it does *not* include the much larger number of Aboriginal people in similar circumstances in reserve, rural non-reserve, and isolated non-reserve communities in the province. This much larger at-risk population is a major source of Aboriginal migration to the urban 'magnet' centres. These people, who arrive homeless or become homeless, represent much of the Aboriginal shelter caseloads.

The additional questions of Aboriginal respondents, asked in the 2002 Calgary survey, reinforce the claims of Aboriginal organisations that urban Aboriginal homeless people tend to have unique backgrounds, which require special measures in order to have a fair chance at re-integrating these people into the socio-economic fabric of society.

**Socio-demographic Questions to Aboriginal Respondents new in 2002, 2002 Calgary Homelessness Survey**[93]

| Question | Absolute Homeless % of 239 Respondents | Relative Homeless % of 71 Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Canadian Citizen | 97.5 (231) | 95.8 (68) |
| Attended a residential school | 21.5 (47) | 14.3 (9) |
| Parents attended a residential school | 20.6 (43) | 19.7 (12) |
| Have been in jail | 77.0 (43) | 58.6 (41) |
| Have been involved with Children's Aid / Child welfare | 37.9 (86) | 32.8 (22) |
| Have been adopted | 22.3 (51) | 10.1 (7) |
| Have lived in an institution other than jail or a residential school (i.e., a hospital) | 28.4 (64) | 10.1 (7) |

Of the Aboriginal absolute homeless alone, 21.5% attended residential school,[k] 20.6% had parents who attended residential school, 77% have been in jail, 37.9% have had problems with child welfare authorities, 22.3% were adopted, and 28.4% were otherwise institutionalised.  The corresponding statistics among Aboriginal relative homeless respondents were lower yet high enough to warrant special attention.  It is fair to say that the Calgary survey is broadly illustrative of a high prevalence of these 'factors for failure' among urban Aboriginal homeless people generally and those of Registered Indian decent particularly.  Other research from Calgary, from the same year, suggests that almost a third of homeless people with mental health problems were Aboriginal.  One should not read too much from the latter survey, which is more limited in scope, but the finding of over-representation should not be a surprise.[94]

The Edmonton example is also instructive.  With 712,391 people on 1 April 2005 (according to the Census), Edmonton is three quarters the size of Calgary but growing at a slower pace more reflective of the other half-dozen major cities in Canada.  Edmonton has a very high proportion of Aboriginal homeless people.

A survey with consistent methodology has been used to count homeless persons in Edmonton since 1999.  These snapshots, taken by 200 volunteers over 24 hours, do not pretend to count all the homeless people, but they do give a fair overall picture and a credible estimate of Aboriginal representation.  Let us compare the 2002 and 2006 results.[95]

In 2002 the number of Caucasian and Aboriginal individuals in Edmonton was evenly split at 43% each, with 14% identified as 'other'.  While the percentages of Caucasian and Aboriginal homeless were similar (43%), more Caucasians than Aboriginals were sheltered, whereas more Aboriginals than Caucasians were absolute homeless.  This is among the highest proportions of Aboriginal representation recorded in Canada.  In 2006, the percentages of Caucasian and Aboriginal homeless were 47% and 38% respectively, up 4% and down 5% respectively.  This does *not* suggest much if any change, due to error margin and the fact that the remaining 15% might include Caucasians and Aboriginals.

In 2006, of the 38% of respondents captured as Aboriginal, 29% were absolute homeless and 9% were 'sheltered homeless".  The Aboriginal count (986 out of 2618 total) does not include children and additional caregivers in families; the addition of these would increase the count by an unknown amount.

While Edmonton's overall population growth over the last decade has been unremarkable, its total homeless population increased four-fold (836 to 2618 people) between 1999 and 2006.  The number of Aboriginal homeless people tripled in six years.  Edmonton's total homeless population grew at an average of 297 people per year over the six years.  Edmonton's Aboriginal homeless population rose by an average of 103 people per year.

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k:    The last federally run residential school, the Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan, closed as late as 1996.

Total Homelessness by Race, Edmonton, March 1999 to October 2006.[96]
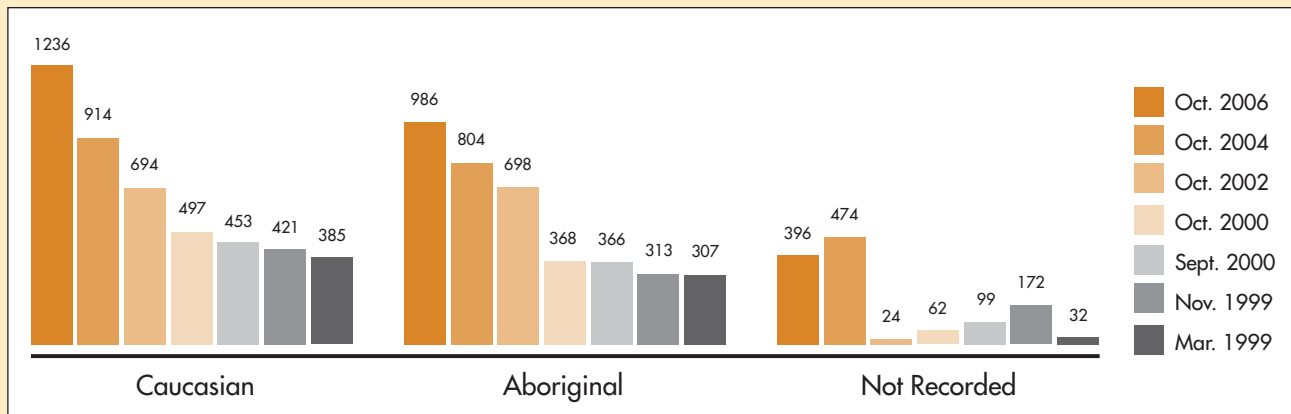


Saskatchewan is a small province with the highest proportion of Aboriginal people. Furthermore, no less than one-half of Saskatchewan's Registered Indian population lives off-reserve. One third (33%) of this half resides in the large urban centres of Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.[97] A 2000 study, by the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, considered the extent and character of First Nations homelessness in Saskatchewan. That study did *not* consider homelessness among the many Métis and non-Status Indians in the province, so its findings present only a part of the picture. Nonetheless, the data from its 472 interviews (Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon) paint a remarkable portrait of a homeless population whose remarkable resourcefulness often keeps its members invisible to the larger society. Consider the responses about what type or kind of place the respondent currently lives in:

- 55% (257) of respondents live in houses
- 29%(132) of respondents live in apartments
- 6% (28) of respondents live in shelters
- 3% (14) of respondents live in room and board
- 0% (1) of respondents live in a garage
- 2% (9) of respondents live outside
- 1% (7) of respondents live in rehabilitation centres
- 1% (7) of respondents live place to place
- 1% (5) of respondents live in transitional housing
- 1% (3) of respondents live in mobile homes
- 0% (2) of respondents live in tents
- 0% (1) of respondents live in a halfway house
- 1% (6) of respondents did not indicate where they live.[98]

Little other research exists about urban Aboriginal hidden homelessness. The 2005 'Distasio' study, into urban Aboriginal hidden homeless in the prairie provinces, provides the most revealing examination, so far, of the demographic characteristics:

- Hidden homelessness in prairie cities is pervasive among the Aboriginal population, yet the relative invisibility of this phenomenon makes it much more difficult to estimate accurately the number of people and to respond with necessary programmes and supports.

- Aboriginal persons experiencing hidden homelessness are a diverse group represented by males and females, youth, single parent families, elders, and, increasingly, families.

- The reasons for housing distress amongst this group are wide-ranging, but all suffer from overwhelming poverty and the lack of adequate shelter opportunities (both long-term and short-term emergency/temporary).

- Approximately one-half of the sample consisted of males (55.8%) and those under the age of 30 (47.5%).

- Over half of the sample (55.2%) reported an annual income of less than $10,000, while 19.8% reported no income at all.

- Approximately one-half (47.2%) expressed some level of apprehension about remaining in their respective city on a permanent basis, while 64% of respondents felt that their economic situation would improve.

- Over a six-month period, 44.2% of sample members reported residence in three or more accommodations. Those who changed residence three or more times before the survey were represented by a higher proportion of females and youth.

- Those reporting no income were more likely to experience more moves and greater residential instability. 72% have moved more than once in the last six months, with 44% moving in excess of three times.

- There is a significant shortage of affordable shelter options for the urban Aboriginal population in Canadian Prairie cities - 30% of respondents reported using an emergency shelter in the last six months; 74% lived in the current location for less than six months; 75% indicated that they were currently living temporarily with friends and family; 52% indicated that they lived in crowded conditions.[99]

Perhaps most interesting of all, the report suggested that most respondents indicated that they had social supports that assisted them in maintaining a roof over their heads, even though they had no shelter options of their own. "It is this social support network that distinguishes absolute homelessness from hidden homelessness. Moreover, this social support network 'hides' the problem of Aboriginal hidden homelessness from mainstream Canadian society."[100]  One can view this in two ways: the exceptional Aboriginal strengths of family and kinship are perpetuating the social problem of hidden homelessness; or, these strengths are preventing many Aboriginal people from hitting rock bottom and relying totally on emergency shelters.

Other studies of smaller geographic scope indicate that, in urban centres in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented among the homeless. Consider Saskatoon, whose overall population rose from 177,640 in 1986 to an estimated 224,476 in 2006. The rate of growth has increased in recent years, but it is still unremarkable. The Aboriginal cohort is growing quite quickly however: 7.5% in 1996 to 9.66% in 2001, only five years later.[101]  The actual number of homeless people in Saskatoon is unknown, but according to a homeless informant in 2000 study, the number is over 3000. Most agree that the number rises at the end of June when school finishes for the summer.[102]  It is generally thought that the majority of young people living on the street in some Saskatchewan centres, including Saskatoon, are Aboriginal.[103]  A 1985 survey estimated that 72% of the homeless men in some Winnipeg neighbourhoods were Aboriginal.[104]  In the absence of credible, more recent evidence, one presumes that this over-representation still persists today.

## Extent of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness – Eastern Canada

Homeless people in Ontario seem to appear to be concentrated in eight urban centres ranging from under 100,000 to over 2,000,000 in municipal population:

Use of Emergency and Shelter Services in Ontario Municipalities, 1998[105]

| Location | Bed Nights - Annual Totals |
| --- | --- |
| Barrie | 8,491 |
| Hamilton-Wentworth | 45,588 |
| Kitchener-Waterloo | 35,444 |
| North Bay | 5,328 |
| Ottawa-Carleton | 192,720 |
| Peel | 28,403 |
| Peterborough | 3,762 |
| Toronto | 1,168,000 |
| Total | 1,487,736 |

The numbers shown are bed occupancy counts from 1998. These figures are certainly outdated, particularly since considerable assistance of the NHI, towards providing more beds and in more locations, had not yet been felt. Nonetheless, the table above gives some sense of the distribution of the clientele by main centre. While other localities have homeless populations also; e.g., Brantford, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, the magnet effect of Toronto and Ottawa is apparent. The Ontario informants in the present Study held the opinion that Toronto is the main magnet centre for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario. Toronto seems to be the final destination of many homeless Aboriginal people across Ontario, if only because it is by far the largest urban centre. An informant from Ontario suggested that:

> These people are desperate, not stupid. They move on when where they can't survive in a small town. They look for shelters, food banks, programmes, better panhandling, even other people in the same situation. They're lonely, lost. They need familiar faces, people they can relate to.

Another informant suggested simply that:

> Not everybody can move...how do you hitchhike with two kids and social services wanting to see you twice a week? Those that can, go towards opportunity. They think big places mean bigger opportunities. Oh yeah, bigger opportunity to just disappear forever. In the smaller centres you can see them better, maybe reach out to them. Big cities like Toronto just swallow them up.

It is evident from a few credible studies that Toronto is a large 'magnet' with disproportionate Aboriginal representation among the homeless:

- A 1992 study estimated that Native people, Black people, and Asiatic people made up one third of Toronto's homeless population.[106]

- A 1997 survey of homeless people in Toronto found that Natives and Blacks people were over-represented in the homeless population 5% and 15% respectively.[107]

- Also in 1997, Native people accounted for 25% of the homeless population but only 2% of the city's total population.[108]

As with other major centres, Toronto's Aboriginal homeless population greatly exceeds any Aboriginal-specific shelter capacity that may exist. Officials connected with two Toronto Aboriginal men's shelters - Na-me-res and Council Fire (now closed over lack of funding) – communicated clearly that the Toronto's homeless Aboriginal population is vastly greater than their facilities could possibly cope with. Moreover, the geographic vastness of the city means that any given shelter has but a tiny snapshot of the overall situation. The state of knowledge about urban Aboriginal homelessness elsewhere in Ontario is quite limited.

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Aboriginal homeless populations are known to exist in Ontario outside of Toronto but credible statistics are in short supply.  A reasonable estimate from 2000 suggests that 20% of homeless people in Ottawa are Aboriginal.[109]   A 2005 study of Ottawa's homeless Aboriginal population provides further details worthy of close examination:

- Aboriginal men were typically the most predominant group among the non-Caucasian cultures represented in the general male client population of mainstream agencies. According to mainstream agencies interviewed for this study, between 10% and 40% of male clients have an aboriginal background.  Other studies (Aubrey et al., 2003) have found that about 20% of the overall homeless population and 10% of homeless men in Ottawa have an Aboriginal background – an over-representation relative to their 1.1% proportion in the Ottawa population at large.

- Mainstream agencies serving homeless men report that aboriginal clients are in a similar age range to male clients as a whole and that ages can range from as young as teens to persons well over fifty, but men aged 40-45 predominate among the homeless.

- Aboriginal women may comprise a larger proportion of the aboriginal homeless than is the case for women in the overall homeless population.  According to the literature, studies have found that about 30% of the aboriginal homeless population is comprised of women and 70% men.  Non-aboriginal mainstream agencies interviewed for this research estimated that about 20% of their homeless population in general is comprised of women and 80% men.  However, Odawa Native Friendship Centre estimates that 15% of their homeless clients are women and 85% are men. Wabano Health Centre sees more women (60%) than men (40%), however, most of these clients are not homeless.  For the mainstream agencies serving women only, the percent that are Aboriginal ranges from about 5% to 25%.

- The agencies estimated the age range of their Aboriginal female clients to be between 18 and 80 with an average age of 30-40 years of age. However, those fleeing violence are younger and have an average age of 25. The ages of the aboriginal women interviewed for this research ranged from 18 to 49 with an average age of 40.

- There is some indication that the number of Aboriginal women accessing Aboriginal services is on the rise.

- About 6-7% of all youth clients in the Young Women's Shelter, awaiting Youth Services Bureau housing or accessing downtown drop-in services, are Aboriginal.  Slightly more males than females are represented in this group.  These youth have multitude needs including basic needs such as shelter, food, and health care as well as more complex needs associated with substance abuse, lack of education, abuse, unemployment, and relations with significant others.  They often have concurrent disorders and are in poor health.  The Odawa Native Friendship Centre reports that 15% of its homeless clients are youth.

- Aboriginal agencies that serve both men and women report that their clients range from babies to elders.  Odawa estimates that about 15% of their homeless clients are families.

- One francophone agency serving only women (a drop-in centre) estimates that 30% of their 40 clients are Aboriginal – mostly single mothers.  These women do not speak French, however they come to the Centre with their children because it is welcoming, open in the evenings, and offers programs for women only.  Many of the women are fleeing abusive partner situations.[110]

The distribution of homeless people in Quebec is poorly understood – at least not in the public literature - and even less is known about the Aboriginal cohort.  Quebec's homelessness problem must be significant, considering that by February 2005 the Government of Canada had invested more than $122M of NHI funding in 661 projects to reduce homelessness in Quebec.[111]  One expects the state of the knowledge to improve due to significant financial contributions from the NHI, and as statistics from Quebec's shelters and captured through HIFIS become available to researchers.  Until then it is necessary to use limited, dated research.

Estimates of the extent of homelessness in Quebec vary.  The first attempt to estimate Quebec's homeless population seems to have occurred in 1987 through a survey by the Canadian Council on Social Development.[112]  That study estimated, based on a snapshot of 10,762 people staying in participating shelters, that the national homeless population is between 130,000 and 250,000 people.  Most were in Alberta (14%), Ontario (42%), and Quebec (17.5%).  This survey was so seriously criticised that Statistics Canada, who repeated the exercise using similar methodology, lacked sufficient confidence to release its own results.  In 1991 it was estimated that 94.2% of a 299 sample of homeless people in Montreal were White, 3.1% were Black, and a low 2.6% were 'other including Aboriginal.'[113]

Nine years after the disappointing CCSD survey, the Quebec government estimated that, based on limited studies, in 1996 the province had 15,000 homeless persons of whom 10,000 were in the City of Montreal alone.  These data reflected the number of people who experienced homelessness throughout the year, rather than the number of people without shelter each night.[114]  A 1996 survey by Santé Québec indicated that 28,000 people used soup kitchens and shelters in Montreal.  The Gazette is reported to have commented that "The new figure of 28,000 homeless represents a much more troubling reality than the figure of 15,000 that has been used during the last 10 years or so."[115]

The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM) offers what appears to be the most credible Aboriginal homeless statistics available for Montreal.  The Centre reports that present statistics from its Urban Referral Department clearly demonstrate that:

> …Aboriginal population are over-represented among the homeless and at-risk homeless population in Montreal.  The [NFCM] is presently servicing over 1200 men, women and children.  This does not

include the sizeable numbers that frequent the Native Women's Shelter and do not come to the NFCM, clients at Chez Doris or Stella nor the growing street youth that use the Urban Multipurpose Youth Centre. If accepts population estimates of 5,000 for the estimated population size, these numbers would seem to indicate that 1 in 5 Aboriginal people are homeless according to the definition used by the SCPI process. 1 in 2 Inuit are homeless and what is disconcerting is the "chronic" homelessness that is affecting our community. Over 25% of the clients at Urban Referral have been relying on its services for over 6 years. The Native Women's Shelter reports a similar phenomenon. If the numbers continue to grow at their present rate (120 files per year) and if 90% continue to be "chronically itinerant", the numbers will double in less than 5 years. Already, the Native Friendship Centre's resources are at their limit. The Native Women's' Shelter is faced with the difficult choice of choosing between homeless families and those who face violent situations. [116]

The NFCM provides various other service demand statistics. Here are some more of the Centre's especially enlightening observations (which are several years out of date):

- Since 1999, over 90% of the Centre's clients are still relying on the Centre for emergency assistance. This suggests a high rate of chronic condition. The NFCM's Urban Referral Department has long ceased to be a referral service; now it is in the front line providing crisis intervention at an unmanageable level of 650 active files per year. This has led to a rapid decline in service, delays and complications, causing the system to teeter on the verge of collapse.

- The Inuit are clearly over-represented in all categories of homelessness. They account for less than 10% of the Aboriginal population in Montreal but nearly 43% of those who are homeless. They are also more likely to access mainstream services but are the most likely to become chronically homeless.

- Among First Nations, the highest homeless rate is among the Innu, Algonquins, Atikamekw, and Micmac. It is rare to find Abenaki, Huron-Wendat, Malécite, Mohawk among the numbers, suggesting that those who at greatest risk come from communities in remote areas and whose mother tongue is not French.

- Homelessness among Aboriginal men has received little attention and remains one of the most invisible problems. The Aboriginal community has long recognised the need for a Native men's shelter but statistics are unavailable. The number of "hard core" Aboriginal homeless men is currently impossible to estimate, but workers with the Onen'token treatment services and Native para-judicial services are well aware of their existence.

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- Between 250 and 300 Aboriginal people in Montreal face chronic homelessness. The numbers include those using shelters, drop-in centres, and a growing number living permanently on the street. (These numbers are difficult to gauge, since they are based on the perceptions of street patrol personnel).

Very little is known of Aboriginal homelessness elsewhere in Quebec. Most of the observations from the NFCM probably have broad application in other urban centres in Quebec, except perhaps over-representation by Inuit because Montreal is the main air transportation locus (and specialised hospital centre) for Quebec's Inuit communities. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Native people most at risk of homelessness arrive in Francophone centres from remote communities where the mother tongue is English or a Native language.

Little can be said of the Aboriginal homelessness situation in the Maritime provinces except that a problem certainly exists. A 2004 study estimated, from a one-night snapshot count (of living rough, using shelters, or otherwise without shelter) that 11% of homeless people in the Halifax Regional Municipality are Aboriginal, while 14% are Black.[117] There is little to suggest, however, that over-representation of Aboriginals in the Maritime homeless urban populations is as extreme as, say, in Calgary, Edmonton, or Saskatoon. The 2001 shelter occupancy rates, captured by the 2001 Census, provide a count of occupancy for one March day at homeless shelters, halfway houses, and emergency lodgings for abused spouses and their children. A count of 14,145 for all of Canada is broken down thus: British Columbia 1,085; Alberta 1,935; Saskatchewan 255; Manitoba 885; Ontario 6,100; Quebec 3,365; New Brunswick 265; Nova Scotia 165; Newfoundland and Labrador 45; and Prince Edward Island 5. These are quite possibly under-counts which, in any event, give no hint of the provincial Aboriginal cohorts.

Table E-1- Revenues as Declared, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc., 2002-05

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 4,566 | 31,612 | 4,566 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | 58,220 | 67,457 | 58,220 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 166,865 | 70,312 | 166,865 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | 154,584 | 300,203 | 154,584 |
| P/T revenue | 82,328 | 30,000 | 82,328 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | 30,625 | 57,079 | 30,625 |
| Federal Revenue | 398,474 | 120,942 | 398,474 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 511,427 | 200,921 | 511,427 |
| Total revenue | 1,018,596 | 911,211 | 1,018,596 |
| OSR[1] | 507,169 | 710,290 | 507,169 |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 49.8% | 78.0% | 49.8% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | 39.1% | 13.3% | 39.1% |

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1:   OSR is defined here as total revenues minus total government revenues.  This total revenues figures shown in these tables are greater than the sum of the non-governmental revenues shown.  This is because, in the interest of simplifying complex financing, some minor categories of revenue are omitted from these tables.

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Table E-2 - Revenues as Declared, Salvation Army Saskatoon Community Centre / Home Community Church, 2002-06

|  | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | 174,000 | 184,000 | 202,000 | 202,000 | 262,065 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 133,839 | 69,626 | 106,425 | 91,653 | 134,439 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | 38,807 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 147,809 0 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 46,062 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | NR | 34,510 | 51,227 | 55,088 | 616,785 |
| P/T revenue | 458,901 | 531,906 | 607,889 | 617,280 | 0 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250,759 |
| Federal Revenue | 213,533 | 236,737 | 302,842 | 220,340 | 867,544 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 672,434 | 768,643 | 910,731 | 837,620 | 1,543,763 |
| Total revenue | 1,270,300 | 1,285,818 | 1,575,110 | 1,487,174 | 676,219 |
| OSR | 597,866 | 517,175 | 664,379 | 649,554 | 43.8% |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 47.1% | 40.2% | 42.2% | 43.7% | 16.2% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | 16.8% | 18.4% | 19.2% | 14.8% |  |

Table E-3 - Revenues as Declared, Prince George Native Friendship Centre, 2002-06

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 8,334 | 9,485 | 5,460 | 2,876 | 7,978 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | 180,500 | 208,388 | 1,494 | 3,407 | 12,518 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 225,455 | 186,562 | 167,280 | 142,489 | 136,865 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | NR | 120,699 | 30,953 | 163,819 | 208,176 |
| P/T revenue | NR | 2,883,971 | 2,669,939 | 2,824,188 | 3,710,270 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | NR | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Federal Revenue | NR | 2,004,692 | 1,471,863 | 1,476,332 | 1,469,831 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 6,213,752 | 4,888,663 | 4,141,802 | 4,300,520 | 5,180,101 |
| Total revenue | 7,804,082 | 7,500,095 | 6,607,570 | 6,528,174 | 7,132,971 |
| OSR | 1,590,330 | 2,611,432 | 2,465,768 | 2,227,654 | 1,952,870 |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 20.4% | 34.8% | 37.3% | 34.1% | 27.4% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | NA | 26.7% | 22.3% | 22.6% | 20.6% |

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Table E-4 - Revenues as Declared, Na-Me-Res, 2002-06

|  | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | NR | 150,681 | 471,440 | 782,995 | 678,028 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 163,631 | 335,453 | 774,307 | 195,897 | 249,961 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | NR | 0 | 35,405 | 20 | 370 |
| P/T revenue | 1,880 | 20,183 | 64,189 | 79,271 | 65,560 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | 1,046,271 | 1,595,099 | 2,715,648 | 2,791,970 | 2,836,125 |
| Federal Revenue | 276,010 | 239,922 | 261,925 | 178,153 | 294,658 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 1,324,161 | 1,855,204 | 3,041,762 | 3,049,394 | 3,196,343 |
| Total revenue | 2,068,735 | 3,029,890 | 4,365,265 | 4,141,168 | 4,345,117 |
| OSR | 744,574 | 1,174,686 | 1,323,503 | 1,091,774 | 1,148,774 |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 36.0% | 38.8% | 30.3% | 26.4% | 73.6% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | 13.3% | 7.9% | 6.0% | 4.3% | 6.8% |

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Table E-5 - Revenues as Declared, Toronto Native Council Fire Cultural Centre, 2002-05

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | NR | 27,953 | 26,907 | 23,388 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| P/T revenue | 364,781 | 346,920 | 233,524 | 238,999 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | 1,383,427 | 1,279,381 | 1,362,454 | 1,608,166 |
| Federal Revenue[n] | 228,088 | 263,071 | 165,000 | 165,000 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 2,334,562 | 1,889,372 | 1,760,978 | 2,012,165 |
| Total revenue | 2,385,316 | 2,210,665 | 2,061,533 | 2,324,892 |
| OSR | 50,754 | 321,293 | 300,555 | 312,727 |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 2.1% | 14.5% | 14.6% | 13.5% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | 9.6% | 11.9% | 8.0% | 7.1% |

n:    Federal SCPI funding is hidden in the municipal funding.

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Table E-6 - Revenues as Declared, Salvation Army St. John's Downtown Core Ministries
- The Wiseman Centre, 2002-2006

|  | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other charities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 118,350 |
| Tax-receipted gifts | 0 | 3,666 | 1,275 | 550 | 0 |
| Fundraising (not reported as gifts) | NR | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rent (Land and buildings) | 0 | 8,624 | 3,221 | 1,005 | 0 |
| Sale of Goods & Services | NR | 0 | 0 | 0 | 133 |
| P/T revenue | NR | 584,307 | 688,610 | 775,122 | 596,187 |
| Municipal / Regional Revenue | NR | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Federal Revenue | NR | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Govt Revenue | 579,035 | 584,307 | 688,610 | 775,122 | 596,187 |
| Total revenue | 611,815 | 606,797 | 713,123 | 924,950 | 715,704 |
| OSR | 32,780 | 22,490 | 24,513 | 149,828 | 119,517 |
| OSR as % Total Revenue | 5.4% | 3.7% | 3.4% | 16.2% | 16.7% |
| Federal revenue as % of total | NA | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

# Endnotes

1    e.g., *Homelessness in the Territorial North* (Webster, 2006) found informants connected with homeless programmes extremely reluctant to be identified in any way.  This was connected with concern that their views could upset their funding agencies or, when they worked for a territorial department, their superiors.

2    e.g., Klodawsky et al. (2002) discuss the inadvisability of using media coverage to develop local policy on homelessness.

3    The NHI (now the HPS) describes the benefits of HIFIS to shelters, communities, researchers, etc. thus: Software that manages data for daily operations and reporting; Part of a federal Initiative for policy change, understanding and causes of homelessness; Built by and for shelters; User friendly and evolves with user needs; Reporting can be customised; Provides information for shelters and partnerships; Increases community capacity to report, organise and share data; On site training provided by national trainer; Data conversion provided by technical experts; Improves ability to co-ordinate, plan and distribute resources; Increases involvement of various communities of interest; considers the needs of others who may use the data for other purposes (regional, provincial, national levels); Secure way to provide anonymous information; Part of a federal Initiative for policy change, understanding and causes of homelessness; Provides information to support action; Provides information for research, policy and / or programme development at all levels; Increases participation of all stakeholders; Centralises source of demographic information on segments of the homeless population; and Helps establish a source of comparable data on the characteristics of the homeless across Canada.  ("Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Initiative: Stakeholder Benefits". (www.homelessness.gc.ca/hifis/information/docs/stakeholderbenefitssheet_e.pdf). Accessed 1 March 2007.)

4    The 'leverage in competition' selling point is frequently expressed verbally by officials.  It tends to appear more subtly in official communications.  The message can be found embedded in numerous documents; e.g.,: *Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Initiative: Business Plan 2005-2006.* National Secretariat on Homelessness.  (www.homelessness.gc.ca/hifis/archive/docs/busplan04-05_e.pdf).  Accessed 28 December 2006;  "The Canadian Experience: Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Performance Measurement".  Address by Jeff Bullard, Director, National Homelessness Initiative, Government of Canada to the 2005 National Homeless Management Information Strategies Conference held on 13 September 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri.  (www.homelessness.gc.ca/hifis/information/docs/internationalHMIS05_e.pdf).

5    For an idea of the capabilities and limitations of *HIFIS, see: HIFIS 101 - A Simple Guide to CMHC's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System.*  National Secretariat on Homelessness. (www.homelessness.gc.ca/hifis/docs/manuals/trainingmanual_e.doc)  Accessed 5 January 2007; *Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Initiative: Generic HIFIS 2.0 Data Sharing Protocol (DSP).* National Secretariat on Homelessness.  (www.homelessness.gc.ca/hifis/information/docs/generic2dsp_e.pdf).  Accessed 5 January 2007.

6    Part of a response, for information such as shown in the bulleted list, from an official in an e-mail dated 7 December 2007.  The specifics of these and related communications will be kept anonymous out of respect for the officials involved, who are simply reflecting the reality of the constraints inherent in HIFIS.

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7   e.g., See Burt and Wilkins (2005).

8   Jim Woodward and Associates et al. (2006:10-12).

9   This figure 1,130 is a crude estimate for daily unmet bed-space need for homeless people.  It does not necessarily imply a need for 1,130 more shelter and safe house beds for two main reasons.  First, the number of homeless people wanting a bed will vary according to season, weather conditions, and so on.  Second, the average daily unmet need can be partially met by adjusting the continuum between housing and shelter services.

10   In the 2006 Vancouver study, the size of each sub-population is matched by the number of spaces designated for that group or, in the case of the Aboriginal population, available through Aboriginal shelter agencies.  This approach is an imperfect way of measuring actual adequacy of the system but it provides an indicator of relative adequacy.

11   Jim Woodward and Associates et al. (2006).  Graph is reproduced from p. 13.

12   Distasio et al. (2005:75).

13   Hwang (2001:230); see also: City of Toronto (2000); Stroik (2004); Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee (2002).

14   Salée et al. (2006) provide a very good examination of the quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada.

15   e.g., See the study by Corrado Research and Evaluation Associates Inc. (2003) on housing discrimination in Winnipeg and Thompson, Manitoba.

16   "RCMP to Investigate Allegations by Homeless Against Edmonton Police" Canadian Press.  2 February 2006.

17   Social Data Research Ltd. (2005:22).

18   Prince George Native Friendship Centre website.  http://www.pgnfc.com/ketso.htm.  Accessed 5 March 2007.

19   It is enlightening to consider the change in service ideas, rationales, and sophistication of the debate between Daly (1996) and City of Vancouver (2005).

20   e.g., Maaka and Fleras (2005).

21   e.g., Walker (2005).

22   e.g., Memmott (2002) identifies for Australia 15 categories of responses as follows: legislative approaches; patrols and outreach services; diversionary strategies; addressing anti-social behaviours; philosophies and methods of interaction; alcohol strategies; regional strategies; accommodation options; dedicated service centres and gathering places; physical design of public spaces; education strategies; phone-in services; skills and training for field and outreach workers; partnerships; holistic approaches.

23   The ceremonial use of peyote is often employed by skilled healers as a form of group therapy to provide relief and direction from anguish.  The effects of peyote are generally rather feeble except in high concentrations, due somewhat to the fact that many of its constituents are antagonistic in their effects.  The mature plant, Lophophora williamsii, has nine principal alkaloids (including mescaline, anhalidine, anhalonidine, anhalinine, pellotine, dopamine and lophophorine) among at least fifty others, none of them useful in clinical therapy.  Mescaline, a constituent, is addictive in pure form and can induce toxic

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psychosis syndrome.  The toxicity of one minor component - lophophorine - has disinclined researchers from investigating the entire peyote cactus in therapeusis.  Together, and under guidance, they can have therapeutic effect according to a considerable and mostly American literature.  The sceptic of psychiatric rejection of peyote, and indeed of traditional healing practices generally, should consult Masson (1988).  The Author suggests this book only to contrast the extreme polarity of the medical model with the traditional approaches.  Persons interested in the pharmacological and other aspects of peyote, particularly, should consult Anderson (1980).

24   Norman Maier (1965) observed that animals, when exposed to environmental conditions where their behaviour meant little to how the environment responded to them, developed behaviour patterns whereby the actual consequences of their actions ceased to be a factor in the way they acted towards their environment.  He called this "*frustration instigated behaviour*".  Sociologist Richard Ball (1973) was interested in *frustration instigated behaviour*.  He applied it to a collective situation – populations of Southern Appalachia in the USA.  He looked at areas where social dysfunction was reported to be high and chronic.  Ball noted that Maier's notions fitted these situations.  The individuals seemed to be born dysfunctional, but, as a people, had a long history of being subjected to "unremitting physical, economical, and social frustration, repeatedly blocked, pressured, and defeated by their environment."  In other words: People deprived of their ability to act on their environment will become, over time, increasingly anxious.
When the anxiety is of long duration, they will resort to any behaviour that will provide temporary soothing of the internal discomfort.

25   First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (2005:41).  The relevant chapter (3), on housing conditions, was written by Andrew Webster.

26   For a very good bibliography on delivering health services to homeless people, see the University of Ottawa Medical School's web page "Delivering health care to the homeless" at (www.med.uottawa.ca/homeless/tools/bibliography_e.html).  Accessed 20 January 2007.

27   Wallace (1950) is the classic study of the early development of the cost-shared, fiscal-federalism-based, welfare state in Canada.   The uneasy relationship, between federal revenue-generating capability and provincial jurisdiction, was fully explored in the 1930s by the Rowell-Sirois Commission.  The essential points are found in Mackintosh (1939) and Book I of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations* (1941).

28   The tax rental agreements were replaced by the Equalisation Programme.  Bélanger (2001) provides an excellent discussion of the troubled evolution from tax rental to Equalization.  For an example of a tax rental agreement, see:   "The 1942 Tax Rental Agreement between the governments of Québec and Canada." (www.saic.gouv.qc.ca/publications/Positions/Part3/Document2_en.pdf).  Accessed 10 January 2007.

29   The Author made this observation in his examination of homelessness in the Territorial North (2006).

30   Strong Leadership – A Better Canada.  Economic Statement, October 31 2007.  Ottawa: Department of Finance.  (www.fin.gc.ca/budtoce/2007/ec07_e.html).  Accessed 31 October 2007.  Other economic reports substantiate unprecedented conditions of low unemployment, low social assistance dependency, high GDP, and a Canadian dollar on par after many decades with the US dollar.

31 The "Canada-Ontario Indian Welfare Agreement" (1965) provides Ontario with reimbursement of costs pursuant to a list of programmes appended as a schedule. Ontario soon started to cry 'foul' as it introduced new welfare programmes additional to this list. The federal department administering the Agreement (National Health and Welfare, later Indian Affairs and Northern Development) was reluctant to discuss updating this schedule. Consequently, the schedule was habitually out of date, and Ontario was left covering costs for new, revised, and even renamed programmes. See Webster and Moscovitch (1993 and 1995) for a fuller discussion of this agreement and the intergovernmental issues of the day.

32 For detailed discussions of the jurisdictional disputes and the fiscal landscape in respect of programmes and services to Aboriginal people, see: Webster (2005) and Webster (1995).

33 Webster (2005:1).

34 ibid, p.5.

35 Memoranda, Federal-Provincial Conference on Indian Affairs, 29-30 October 1964, "Financing, Including Consideration of the Scope and Extent of Provincial Responsibilities," pp.1-2.

36 e.g., See evidence, proceedings, and judgments re: the Samson Cree Nation v. H.M. The Queen in Right of Canada. It is also worthwhile to review the Plaintiff's claim in respect of breach of obligation to provide programmes and services; this is an aspect of the massive case that has not yet reached trial stage.

37 Paul Shelly, Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment to President of St. John's Native Friendship Centre James Igloliorte, 15 May 2006.

38 The debate across North America on shelter per diems continues very active particularly in government reports and debates, advocacy campaigns, and media reports. To illustrate the high profile of the matter, consider "The Cost of Homelessness" episode of the CBC's "Fifth Estate", originally broadcast on 10 March 2004.

39 "Briefing Note - Request for Information Related to 2006 Operating Budget for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration." City of Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Branch. 9 January 2006.

40 "Native Leaders Blame Ottawa for Aboriginal Homeless Problem". CBC News. 16 April 2004.

41 HRDC (2003:31).

42 Written accounts of these tensions are legion. A person new to this subject would find it most enlightening to see the National Film Board's 1998 production "East Side Showdown." This documentary film is often shown in university courses, such as for Bachelor of Social Work degrees, to illustrate the face of conflict between organised local residents, shelters, and advocates for the poor. The film chronicles how local residents, in downtown Toronto, organise themselves and eventually bring about the closure of a shelter that they object to. The result is simply that the homeless people relocate to a few blocks away, in someone else's 'back yard', and real estate values in the former locality rise.

43 "Off Reserve Family Violence Prevention Emergency/Transition /Second Stage Shelter – If it is necessary for the safety of individuals or families to be placed off-reserve, the eligible expenditures are the actual costs of maintaining individuals or families in family violence prevention shelters off reserve, based on provincial/ territorial per diem rates and rules (i.e. food, shelter, counselling, psychological services, career planning, referrals to other social agencies, personal items, special needs, emergency clothing, travel, and recreation).

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Notes: Rent and maintenance costs for facilities located on reserve are not eligible expenditures under this contribution." *First Nations Child and Family Services - National Programme Manua*l.  Appendix B: Summary of Prevention and Protection Services – Contribution Authority.  (www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/mnl/fnc/apb_e.html).  Accessed 10 January 2007.

[44] Annual returns from 2000-2006 are available at: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/ta/charities/.  Accessed 8 February 2007.

[45] Information from Infinity House / CUMFI financial statements.

[46] "TDRC Accuses Toronto City Council of Putting Homeless at Risk" *Globe and Mail*, 27 April  2000.

[47] The programmes provided are: Aboriginal Cultural Youth Gathering, Aboriginal Peoples Music, Aboriginal Urban Youth Summer Outreach, Community Access, Employment Assistance,  Urban Multi-Purpose Aboriginal Youth Centres, and Violence Prevention.

[48] e.g., see statements by Patrick Brazeau, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, in Roundtable on Urban Aboriginal Governance: Summary of the 5th IOG Aboriginal Governance Roundtable, Ottawa, January 20, 2005.  Ottawa: Institute on Governance.

[49] "'Too Many Chiefs,' Aboriginal Leader Says", by Bill Curry.  Globe and Mail, 11 July 2006.

[50] "Fontaine Sounding Optimistic" by Paul Barnsley.  *Windspeaker*, January 2007.

[51] "Let's Trade Politics for Progress on Aboriginal Rights", by Patrick Brazeau.  Globe and Mail, 6 February 2007.

[52] "WHEREAS the National Indian Brotherhood / Assembly of First Nations (hereinafter referred to as the 'AFN') and the National Association of Friendship Centres (hereinafter referred to as the 'NAFC') have indicated a desire to enter in a Memorandum of Understanding; and WHEREAS the AFN recognizes the important urban service delivery function of the NAFC and the priority issues of access to culturally appropriate service for First Nations peoples living in urban areas; and WHEREAS the NAFC recognizes that AFN is a political organization and advocate for First Nation governments; and WHEREAS the AFN and the NAFC agree that it is our mutual desire to work together in support of all First Nations peoples, regardless of residency…".  Memorandum of Understanding Between the National Indian Brotherhood / Assembly of First Nations and the National association of Friendship Centre.  Dated 10 April 2006.

[53] "Homelessness Partnering Strategy".  PowerPoint briefing deck presented by Human Resources and Social Development Canada to the National Summit on Urban Aboriginal Housing, Winnipeg, 11 March 2007.  Like the federal government, some churches have issued formal apologies regarding their own historic roles in the residential schools oppression and abuses.  The United Church is one example ("United Church of Canada Social Policy Positions (1998): Apology to Former Students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to Their Families and Communities."  (www.united-church.ca/policies/1998/a623.shtm) but, in general, an apology does not necessarily mean that church-operated shelters consider the residential schools legacy when providing assistance today.

[54] On 7 January 1998, the Hon. Jane Stewart and the Hon. Ralph Goodale unveiled 'Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan.'  This was a long-term response to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.  In it is a 'Statement of Reconciliation: Learning from the Past' in which the Government of Canada apologises to persons who experienced physical and sexual abuse at Indian Residential Schools.

It also, without mentioning specifics, acknowledged a federal role in the development and administration of residential schools. Media coverage of that day and the apology may be found at: (sisis.nativeweb. org/clark/jan0898cli.html) Accessed 20 March 2007.

56 "A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians: An Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the Provinces and Territories." Dated 4 February 1999.

57 The new Government has made various written statements about its off-reserve interests and desire to take a more direct leadership role, on- and off-reserves. For example, during the 2006 election, Mr. Stephen Harper wrote the following on 10 January 2006 to Mr. Dwight Dorey, President of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples: "The fundamental obligation of a Conservative federal government would be to improve the living conditions and educational and economic opportunity of all Aboriginal Canadians including off-reserve, urban and non-status Indian and Métis." and "The Conservative Party of Canada believes that the ratio for the funding on-reserve and off-reserve programs and services should reflect the needs expressed by Aboriginal communities. We believe that there needs to be a realignment of federal aboriginal expenditures to include appropriate and adequate distribution of resources in order to accommodate the needs of off-reserve and non-status Indians. We are prepared to discuss the current ratio with the interested parties in order to assure that this funding is directed towards the needs of Aboriginal communities." and "A Conservative government will acknowledge its jurisdiction for basic programs and services to "Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians". Legislation will be enacted in the main program areas. Ottawa will become responsible for results, ending four decades of service gaps and offloading costs onto the provinces. Legislation will provide a proper basis for accountability at departmental and First Nations levels. The existing financial transfer agreements will be replaced with ones that work."

58 This sum would be available for homelessness projects in the census metropolitan areas of Montreal and Quebec City and in the cities of Chicoutimi, Trois-Rivières, Drummondville, Hull and Sherbrooke. ("Minister Claudette Bradshaw Welcomes Agreement with Government of Quebec on Homelessness". HRSDC press release dated 15 December 2000.)

59 "Aboriginal communities" are defined under the NHI to "include groups and individuals who came together to plan and apply for funding for projects with a focus on Aboriginal people under the NHI, and the Aboriginal people they represented who lived in SCPI communities. They may include First Nations organizations, status and non-status Indians, Métis and other Aboriginal individuals living in urban areas." HRDC (2003). Appendix G – Glossary of Terms.

60 The programme descriptions and historical here are adapted from HRDC (2003), particularly Part 2 (Programme Background and Descriptions). See the National Homelessness Initiative Evaluation Framework (2001) for a full description of the NHI's seven components.

61 HRDC (2003:31).

62 HRDC (2003:8, 29).

63 United Native Nations Society (2001:23).

64 Webster (2006).

65 Gardiner et al. (2002).

66 City of Calgary (2002; 2006).

67    City of Calgary (2006:1).

68    Calgary Interagency Committee for the Absolutely Homeless and Newbury Ventures Inc. (2003).

69    2006 data from *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, 28 March 2006.  Other data from 2001 Census.

70    Norris and Clatworthy (2003) analyse these trends and discuss cultural and demographic factors associated with different migration and mobility patterns.

71    The population projections and mobility data used in this section are primarily from Clatworthy (1996, 1997); Clatworthy and Cooke (2001); Norris (1996); and Norris et al. (1995).  Other data are from: "Historical Trends - Registered Indian Population, Canada 1982-2005."  Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.  (www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/sts/htrip/ht-can_e.pdf).  Accessed 5 March 2007 and Basic Departmental Data 2004.  Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.  (www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/sts/bdd04/bdd04_e.html).

72    First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (2005).  In particular see "First Nations Housing and Living Conditions", Chap. 3.

73    These pressures are well-summarised thus: "Families experiencing intergenerational poverty / poor living conditions; Legacy of residential schools and the old Indian Policy of  enforced 'advancement and assimilation'; Systemic racism creating stress and obstacles to advancement; Disproportionate contact with social control agencies (e.g. social services, police); Culture shock when Aboriginal people try to make a better life in the non-Aboriginal world; Few mental health services in Aboriginal communities; Even fewer culturally appropriate mental health services, or other support services in the mainstream health system; Jurisdictional disputes over who should pay for preventative and curative mental health services."  ("What We Know About Aboriginal Mental Health: Importance of Culture and the Need for Collaboration, Partnerships, and Integrated Services".  Presentation by CEO Bernice Downey, National Aboriginal Health Organisation, to the Native Mental Health Association of Canada Conference, 14 October 2005.)

74    McLaughlin (1987).

75    Begin et al. (1999:4).

76    (Begin et al. (1999:16).

77    Hwang (2001).

78    Hwang (2001:230); see also: City of Toronto (2000); Stroik (2004); Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee (2002).

79    Caputo et al. (1994).

80    Goldberg, M., et al. (2005:1).

81    Siggner and Goldberg (2006:1).

82    Graves, J., 2004.  Administrative report to Vancouver City Council re: meeting of 24 February 2004, RTS No. 03962, CC File No. 4659.  (www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20040224/rr1b.htm).  Accessed 20 October 2006.

83    e.g., see Eberle (2001a; 2001b; 2001c) and United Native Nations Society(2001).

84    Eberle (2001b:23).

85    United Native Nations Society (2001: s. 3.1.3).

86    *Annual Demographic Statistics* 2005, Catalogue 91-213. Statistics Canada.

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87   Horizon Housing Society, c.f. Holley et al. 1997.

88   City of Calgary (1996).

89   Gardiner (2002).  Table 4.

90   c.f. Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee (2002).

91   Hwang (2001:230).

92   Gardiner (2002).  Table 4.

93   Gardiner (2002).  Table 8.

94   Vista Evaluation and Research Services, Inc. (2003).

95   Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee (2002; 2006).

96   Edmonton Homelessness Count Committee (2006).  The graph is reproduced from p. 10.

97   Peters (1996) offers a useful discussion of these demographics.

98   Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (2000:31).

99   Distasio et al. (2005:vi-vii).

100  ibid., p. 75.

101  Saskatoon Community Partnerships Committee (2001; 2003).

102  Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (2000:62).

103  For an overview of this over-representation, and references for these studies, see: Library of Parliament (1999a).

104  Hauch (1985).

105  Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (1999:38).

106  Ambrosio et al. (1992:3).

107  Tolomiczenko et al. (1997), c.f. Springer et al. (1998:12).

108  Arboleda-Florez, J. and H. Holley.  *Calgary Homelessness Study: Final Report, December 1997*.   Alberta Health Report, Alberta, 1997. c.f. Library of Parliament (1999a); see also Goering et al. (1998).

109  Farrell et al. (2000).

110  Social Data Research Ltd. (2005).

111  "Provincial symposium on homelessness and social exclusion receives funding from the Government of Canada".  Service Canada news release, 3 February 2005.

112  McLaughlin (1987).

113  Fournier (1991).

114  c.f. Begin et al. (1999).

115  "Homeless Problem Grows."  The Gazette, 25 November 1998, p. A5.  c.f. Begin et al. (1999).

116  "Homelessness Among Montreal's Aboriginal Population".  (www.nfcm.org/projects_montreal. htm#homeless).  Accessed 18 December 2006.

117  Halifax Regional Municipality Planning and Development Services (2004).

118  The Author made the point in Webster (2006) that the statistics for the NWT (20), Yukon (15), and Nunavut (5) are greatly below what other reports suggest.  The extent to which the provincial data may be under-estimates might be clarified when sufficient HIFAS data have been collected and analysed.