The State of Urban Aboriginal Communities: Final Draft

Submitted to the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network

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May, 2012

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Executive summary

With reference to the policy goals of the Friendship Centre movement, this paper provides a broad overview of some of the key characteristics of urban Aboriginal community development in Canada. The growth of urban Aboriginal communities is highlighted in relation to organizational development and the emergence of urban Aboriginal governing councils as well as improvements in education, employment, and income for some community members. A diversity of barriers to community development are then reviewed including poverty and related social challenges, internal class tensions, and internal discrimination. And lastly, this paper examines some of the structural challenges to urban Aboriginal governance and the need for relationship building and recognition from First Nations and the Canadian government

1. Introduction

Aboriginal people are increasingly living in cities across Canada. All major urban Centres in Canada today are now home to a growing number of Aboriginal residents who participate in mainstream city life and who also see themselves as part of urban Aboriginal communities. Supported by the Friendship Centre movement, urban Aboriginal communities have grown and developed significantly over the last half-century and are understood today as being generally young, culturally diverse, internally governing, mobile, and home to a number of 'ethnic drifters' or new arrivals.

In keeping with the National Association of Friendship Centre's (NAFC) policy objectives to support urban Aboriginal quality of life, self-determination, cultural distinctiveness, and participation in Canadian society, urban Aboriginal communities in Canada have experienced a number of key community development successes including, community-based institutional development and governance, socio-economic advances, and enhanced cultural practices.

In spite of these successes, a significant number of urban Aboriginal residents continue to experience poverty and a number of related social challenges. Moreover, despite the efforts of Aboriginal youth in learning Aboriginal languages as a second language, an important challenge to the 'cultural distinctiveness' of urban Aboriginal communities is the dramatic decline of Aboriginal language use in cities across Canada. As well, there are internal community tensions relating to trends in 'ethnic mobility' and class polarization that manifest in expressions of 'internal discrimination' and lateral violence. The experiences of widespread poverty, when considered in relation to these internal tensions of class and ethnicity, function as important challenges to urban

Aboriginal community cohesion; the basis for future work towards externally recognizable representative urban Aboriginal governance. It is in these areas that the NAFC will need to focus in order to continue to pursue its vision and further realize its policy objectives.

This paper provides a broad review of urban Aboriginal community development since the early years of the Friendship Centre movement. Through the identification of key characteristics and trends in urban Aboriginal communities across Canada in relation to NAFC policy values and objectives, it then further suggests organizational successes as well as continuing challenges over the next decade. This paper begins with a review of the Friendship Centre movement, the growth of urban Aboriginal agencies, and their effective delivery of community and culturally based services. This is followed by a discussion of a diversity of socioeconomic successes relating to education, employment, income, and the emerging urban Aboriginal middle class. In terms of positive developments, this paper further looks at the growth of a number of urban Aboriginal political councils in municipalities across Canada.

Some of the important remaining challenges facing urban Aboriginal communities are then outlined including, poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions, family breakdown, criminality, youth gang involvement, and the significant decline in Aboriginal language use. Moreover, continued disparities in education, employment, and income levels between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are highlighted as are the challenges related to ethnic mobility, internal class polarization, and community lateral violence. And lastly, a number of remaining challenges to urban Aboriginal governance are reviewed in terms of structural impediments to representative

councils and the need for relationship building and recognition from First Nations and the Canadian government.

2. Community Growth and Institutional Development

There are in excess of 1 million people (1,172,790) who now self-identify as an Aboriginal person, comprising 3.8% of the total Canadian population.[1] In Table 1 we see that, of those who identify as an Aboriginal person in Canada, a minority (26%) live on a reserve, while the remaining 74% live off reserve in both rural (21%) and urban (53%) settings. The on-reserve population is comprised primarily (97.5%) of registered Indians, while they account for only 50% of the urban Aboriginal population, with Métis and Inuit populations making up 43% and 7% of the remaining urban population, respectively.

Table 1: Location of Residence, Aboriginal Ancestry/Origins and Identity Population, Census 2006

	Total	**On-Reserve**	**Rural**	**Urban**
Aboriginal Ancestry/ Origin	1,678,235 *(100%)*	308,490 *(18%)*	367,120 *(22%)*	1,002,635 *(60%)*
Aboriginal Identity	1,172,790 *(100%)*	308,490 *(26%)*	240,825 (21%)	623,470 *(53%)*
Registered Indian	698,025 *(100%)*	300,755 *(43%)*	85,210 *(12%)*	312,055 *(45%)*
Metis	389,780 *(100%)*	4,320 *(1%)*	114,905 *(29%)*	270,555 *(70%)*
Inuit	50,480 *(100%)*	435 *(.1%)*	31,065 *(62%)*	18,980 *(37.9%)*

As discussed later in this paper in relation to recent trends in 'ethnic mobility' or 'drifting', the 2006 Census further provides an option of indicating 'Aboriginal ancestry' to signify one's ethnic or cultural origins as Aboriginal, as something distinct from

[1] This paper adheres to the Statistics Canada (2006) definition of Aboriginal identity as 'those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e., North American Indian, Métis or Inuit. Also included are individuals who did not report an Aboriginal identity, but did report themselves as a Registered or Treaty Indian, and/or did report Band or First Nation membership

having an Aboriginal identity. In other words, one may specify having Aboriginal origins without further indicating a corresponding Aboriginal identity. As indicated in Table 1 above, adding this group (people of Aboriginal ancestry and not identity) to those previously discussed as having only Aboriginal identity we then see that the proportion of Aboriginal people living in urban areas increases from 53 to 60 percent and that the proportion of those living on reserves decreases to only 18%.

Despite longstanding and popularly accepted racial stereotypes that tie ideas of authentic Aboriginality to rural/wilderness spaces[2], Table 1 illustrates that a majority of Aboriginal people are now living in Canadian cities. The growth of urban Aboriginal populations in Canada is increasingly understood as occurring in two distinct periods or 'waves' of urbanization. The 1951 Census recorded that only 6.7 percent of the Aboriginal population resided in Canadian cities, while the 'first wave' (1959 to 1971) of Aboriginal urbanization was marked by relatively low rates of population growth (Peters 2001, 63). However, the 'second wave' of urbanization points to significant growth rates (104% at the minimum) in cities across Canada over the last 25 years. In Table 2 we see that the cities of Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver have the largest Aboriginal populations, while the number of Aboriginal people living in Saskatoon and Ottawa – Hull has quadrupled and has more than tripled in Sudbury and Winnipeg over the last 25 years. As well, we see that Toronto has the fourth highest urban Aboriginal population in Canada, but has experienced the lowest growth rate over this period.

[2] For further reading on the many dimensions of stereotypes for Aboriginal people please see Daniel Francis' Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture and Berkhofer's , The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to Present.

Table 2:Aboriginal Identity Population Counts and Growth Rates (Census, 2006)		
Selected CMA	**Aboriginal Identity Population**	**Percentage Increase 1981 to 2006**
Winnipeg	68,385	325.3
Edmonton	52,100	287.9
Vancouver	40,310	162.1
Toronto	26,575	104.2
Calgary	26,575	279.9
Saskatoon	21,535	412.1
Ottawa-Hull	20,250	408.2
Montreal	17,865	128.2
Regina	17,105	167.7
Thunder Bay	10,055	233.5
Sudbury	9970	365.9

In response to the growing number of Aboriginal people moving from reserves to Canadian cities in the 1950s, Friendship Centres emerged as places of community support and advocacy for new residents who were seeking employment, housing, education, and health services. Based upon an organizational vision of urban Aboriginal governance, the 'status blind' delivery of services, community development, volunteerism, and relationship building with non-Aboriginal city residents, the early Friendship Centres in Toronto (1951) and Winnipeg (1959) established an organizational framework or model that formed the basis for subsequent Centres and the movement as a whole (Hall 2009; Obonsawin and Howard-Bobbiwash 1997).

As the urban Aboriginal population continued to grow over time, the number of Friendship Centres also expanded in order to meet the increased demand for these and other related services. By 1972, the NAFC was established to act as a central, unifying national organization in support of a growing friendship centre movement, which at that

time consisted of 45 Friendship Centres and a number of provincial and territorial Friendship Centre associations.[3]

The NAFC has a formal mandate to 'promote and advocate for the concerns of Aboriginal peoples, and to represent the needs of the local Friendship Centres across the country to the federal government and to the public in general.'[4] The NAFC mission builds upon this mandate in that it further focuses the organization towards 'improving the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, and participation in, Canadian Society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.' These principles, mandate and mission are evident in recent NAFC policy initiatives[5] relating to social justice, healing and reconciliation, and the fostering of Mino Bimaadziwin[6].

With the NAFC as its national organization, the friendship centre movement has grown significantly[7] over the last sixty years and there are presently 119 Friendship Centres in cities across Canada offering a wide range of social services to a growing urban Aboriginal population. According to the recent 2012, 'State of the Friendship Centre Movement' report, there are seven major friendship centre service delivery areas

[3] For further detail please see the 1975 Articles of NAFC Incorporation, page 4.

[4] For further reading please see NAFC presentation to the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime: International Indigenous Community Safety Seminar at: http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Seminaire_Autochtone/Jeff_Cyr.pdf

[5] For more detail on NAFC policy initiatives relating to RCMP complaints, gender and economic equity, institutional inclusion, and urban Aboriginal knowledge development, please see: /http://nafc.ca/en/content/policy-research

[6] For further reading on the principles of Mino Bimaadziwin, please see Hart's 2002 Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin, Nabigon's 2006, The Hollow Tree, and Thrasher's (Undated) Life Decisions.

[7] Having grown rapidly from three centres in Toronto (1951), Vancouver (1952), and Winnipeg (1959) in the 1950s to 114 in cities across Canada in 1996, the last 16 years have marked a much slower rate of growth of the movement with an addition of only three new centres, making the present total number of 117 centres.

including, Culture, Family, Youth, Housing, Health, Employment, and Community. These more significant areas receive the greatest amount of funding, have the highest number of programs, and have the largest number of clients.[8] However, other less prominent areas of service delivery continue to be, sports and recreation, language, justice, education, and economic development.

The Friendship Centre movement however, must be understood within the context of a much larger system of urban Aboriginal program and service delivery.[9] From the inception, Friendship Centres have both directly and indirectly contributed to the development of a vast network or 'infrastructure' of community-based, urban Aboriginal organizations; and, have become part of a much larger movement towards urban Aboriginal organization and community building across Canada (Newhouse 2003, 244).

Understanding the state of urban Aboriginal communities in Canada in relation to the operating principles and policy values of the NAFC must therefore be considered within this larger organizational movement, which itself has emerged from and contributed to the growth of urban Aboriginal populations and communities. In Ontario, the 1981 Task Force on Native people in the Urban Setting, like most studies on urban Aboriginal people at that time,[10] pointed to the prevalence of poverty and related social

[8] For further reading please see NAFC, 2012. State of the Friendship Centre Movement 2011-2012 at http://nafc.ca/uploads/annual-reports/State_of_the_Friendship_Centre_Movement_11-12.pdf

[9] For further reading on the extent and diversity of urban Aboriginal organizations in major urban centre please see Hanselmann. 2002, Enhanced Urban Aboriginal Programming in Western Canada, McCaskill and FitzMaurice. 2007 Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Final Report, and Abele et al. 2011 Aboriginal People and Public Policy in Four Ontario Cities, and McCaskill and FitzMaurice. 2011. Toronto Aboriginal Research Project: Final Report.

[10] These findings mirrored the majority of research on the early period of Aboriginal urbanization since the early 1950s which focused on documenting social problems relating to wide-spread poverty, unemployment, addictions, low levels of education, social disorganization, reserve to city transitioning, and culture loss. For further reading see Dosman, 1971. The Urban Dilemma, Nagler, 1970. The Indian in the City, Neils, 1971. Reservation to City, and Krotz, 1980. Urban Indians The Strangers in Canada's Cities.

challenges as well as widespread experiences of racism for a majority of Aboriginal people living in cities. This report further pointed to the lack of services for urban Aboriginal people across a diversity of sectors and recommended the development of Aboriginal organizations in cities to address unmet needs (Maidman 1981, 57). Intended as a follow-up to this original 1981 research, the 2007 Ontario Urban Aboriginal Task Force found that the largest growth in new urban Aboriginal organizations had occurred in the twenty-year period from 1980 to 2000 following the 1981 study. (McCaskill and Fitzmaurice 2007, 88).

The growth of the Friendship Centre movement and the rapid expansion of urban Aboriginal organizations generally can be attributed, in larger part, to their effective delivery of community and culturally based services. Urban Aboriginal organizations often function in significantly different ways than non-Aboriginal social service agencies. The organizational ethos tends to reflect Aboriginal cultural values in all aspects of operations. This then translates into workers having a greater understanding and empathy for their Aboriginal clients and clients expressing feelings of familiarity, acceptance and belonging within Aboriginal organizations (2007, 87).

Broadly speaking, in most major urban centres today there are in excess of twenty urban Aboriginal organizations which provide a range of culturally based social services. These services are offered in areas such as, employment, health, justice and corrections, policing, poverty reduction, child welfare, social housing, homelessness, youth, family counseling, education and training, alcohol and drug counseling, and shelters/drop in centres. On the basis of perceptions of accessibility, the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples

Study found that urban Aboriginal people in different cities tended to prefer particular services. For example, Aboriginal peoples in Halifax were found to be much more likely than those in other cities to find Friendship Centres particularly useful; this was followed by those in Montreal and Vancouver and employment centres were considered of somewhat greater value to Aboriginal peoples in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Regina. Aboriginal people in Toronto were found to be more likely to access health centres, Aboriginal legal services, and child and family services. Lastly, urban Aboriginal residents in Regina were found to highly value housing services, while Aboriginal residents in Vancouver indicated an emphasis on youth services (Environics 2010, 71).

In addition to providing culturally based social services, many urban Aboriginal organizations also organize and sponsor cultural activities such as ceremonial practices, Elder teachings, feasts and socials, and Pow wows. As well, a number of urban Aboriginal organizations such as ImagineNative in Toronto, Urban Shaman in Winnipeg, Our Elders Speak Wisdom Society in Vancouver, and the nationally focused Native Earth Performing Arts work specifically on meeting the cultural learning and arts needs of community members. The recently (2011) released Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) highlighted a vibrant Aboriginal arts community in Toronto reflected in a diversity of artist-run Aboriginal organizations in visual, performance, and theater arts (McCaskill and FitzMaurice 2011, 345).[11]

[11] For a complete on-line version of the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) please see: http://www.nativechild.org/images/pdf/TARP-FinalReport-FA-All%20oct%2025%202011.pdf

Increasingly, Aboriginal organizations are also coming together as political councils in 'community of interest' governance models.[12] Some long-standing examples of these Councils include: 1) The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg; 2) The Vancouver Aboriginal Council; and, 3) the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council. More recently, a number of urban Aboriginal communities have also come together and formed political councils including 1) The Thunder Bay Aboriginal Interagency Council; 2) The Peace River Aboriginal Interagency Committee; 3) The Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge; 4) The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition; and, 5) The Sudbury Aboriginal Peoples' Council. As a form of self-government, urban Aboriginal councils act as a forum for inter-agency program and service delivery cooperation and coordination, the building of equitable funding relationships with government partners, and the representing of the political interests of community members over all.

Urban Aboriginal agencies and their respective councils are also involved in 'reform' activities through their participation in mainstream municipal governments. Although Canadian municipalities have shied away from the establishment of permanent Aboriginal political representation on municipal councils as recommended within the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, there has been a growth in 'urban Aboriginal peoples advisor committees' in cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Toronto, Thunder Bay, and Ottawa.

[12] The voluntary political association of a diversity of urban Aboriginal organizations towards a 'community of interest' style of governance is a model of urban Aboriginal self-government envisioned by the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP). RCAP further noted the model of 'reforming' urban government and public authorities through greater Aboriginal involvement in mainstream municipal governments and permanent Aboriginal political representation on municipal councils and related political bodies and the co-management of urban programs and services.

3. Socioeconomic Successes and the New Middle Class

This extensive and relatively rapid development of urban Aboriginal social service, cultural, and political organizations across Canada has led to a number of important improvements in the well being of urban Aboriginal residents. Statistics Canada has recently (2010) reported that socio-economic indicators such as school attendance, post-secondary completion and employment are improving for Canada's urban Aboriginal population (Census, 2010)[13]. In their long-term (1981 to 2001) study of Census data, Siggner and Costa found improvements in both education and employment levels for urban Aboriginal people. More specifically, the high school completion rates for urban Aboriginal youth have increased, as have the post secondary completion rates for young urban Aboriginal adults. These increases however, did not correspond equally across gender as Aboriginal women had higher completion rates of both high school and postsecondary education (2005, 6).

For a significant number of urban Aboriginal people across Canada, choosing to pursue a post secondary education is primarily motivated by the prospects of employment, financial gain, and living a good life overall (Environics 2010, 121). For many, their employment success relates directly to their success in university and college. Overall, improvements in Aboriginal educations levels over the last twenty-years are translating into better employment prospects. In particular, with the exception of Regina and Saskatoon, young urban Aboriginal university graduates living in most major cities in Canada are now experiencing similar rates of employment as their non-Aboriginal counterparts (2005, 6). Recent Census data further indicates that the employment gap

[13] For further reading please see Fact Sheet: Urban Aboriginal Population in Canada at http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014298/1100100014302

between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in urban areas disappears for those who have completed post-secondary education, especially university (Census, 2010).

Overall, employment rates have generally improved over the last twenty years for Aboriginal people in most major cities in Canada except for Regina. The dependence on government transfer payments and levels of poverty have also decreased over this period as has the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal medium income from employment sources in most cities; this period further marked a 281% growth in the number of Aboriginal people making $40,000 or more (2005, 7).

As Wotherspoon suggests in 'Prospects for a New Middle Class Among Urban Aboriginal People', this significant growth in those urban Aboriginal people making $40,000 or more when considered in relation to rising education levels, increases in the number of Aboriginal people working in managerial and professional positions. Also, the corresponding development of urban Aboriginal professional associations and related publications and journals points to the emerging presence of an Aboriginal middle class in all major cities in Canada (2003, 162). In both the Ontario Urban Aboriginal Task Force (2007) and the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (2011), McCaskill and FitzMaurice further identified the Aboriginal middle class as a growing reality in urban centres, comprising 25% of the urban Aboriginal population across Ontario and 37% of those Aboriginal people living in Toronto (2007, 172; 2011, 216).

In 'Urban Life: Reflections of a Middle-Class Indian', Newhouse points to the growing emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class in the 1980s and the role that it played in the management and delivery of social services in cities across Canada (2010, 32). Acting as executive directors, social workers, counselors, and as agency Board

volunteers, Newhouse further suggests that this professional cadre of Aboriginal people has, in the support of Aboriginal agencies, been instrumental in building a sense of community in the city that is culturally based, and cohesive. In her research with Aboriginal women in Toronto, Howard-Bobbiwash also focused on the role of the middle class in community building and service delivery. In particular, this work highlighted the important leadership roles that Aboriginal women played in promoting Aboriginal culture and developing the early Aboriginal organizations in terms of being able to effectively, 'utilized their class mobility to support the structural development of Native community-based institutions and promote positive pride in Native cultural identity in the city' (2003, 566-582).

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) also found links between the urban Aboriginal middle class, community, culture, and Aboriginal organizations. In this study, those 'more educated and affluent' Aboriginal people were reported as having a greater awareness of Aboriginal cultural activities in their community, as well as being more likely than others to say they often participate in them (2010, 60). Moreover, it was found that urban Aboriginal agencies are instrumental in assisting Aboriginal people in accessing social, economic, as well as cultural services and activities. The UAPS further reported that experiences with particular Aboriginal services and organizations vary substantially by city, and may reflect the different services and organizations available in specific cities. However, Friendship Centres, employment centres and health centres were found to be valued by all urban Aboriginal people, albeit to varying degrees (58).

In contrast to popular, racialized misconceptions that cities are antithetical to Aboriginal cultures, the UAPS study further pointed to an overall sense of Aboriginal

cultural vitality in cities across Canada. Aboriginal cultures are generally perceived as being the most prominent in Toronto and Vancouver, while cultural events are also understood to be regularly available in Halifax and Thunder Bay (57). As well, the UAPS spoke to the complexities of urban Aboriginal communities where similar proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples feel they belong to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities; and, where community is most commonly defined in terms of families and friends and with less of an emphasis on neighbours, cultural affiliation, and Aboriginality (50). Moreover, "although not considered within their community per se", urban Aboriginal residents also feel a sense of connection to other Aboriginal people in their city. (52) And lastly, a 'significant minority' of First Nations peoples and Inuit consider Aboriginal services and organizations, as well as the people from their home communities to be part of their community; and, in Toronto, residents are twice as likely to count Aboriginal services such as Friendship Centres and healing centres as part of their community (52).

4. Continuing Challenges to Urban Aboriginal Community Development

Urban Aboriginal communities are therefore growing and developing in a number of important and ways. In meeting the social service, cultural, community, and governance needs of Aboriginal people living in the city, the number of Friendship Centres and other related urban Aboriginal organizations continue to expand in step with population growth and demographic characteristics. In the delivery of effective community and culturally-based services, urban Aboriginal institutional development has resulted in a number of key successes in keeping with the policy values and objectives of the NAFC and the Friendship Centre movement overall.

In providing a range of services to Aboriginal people living in the city, Friendship Centres and other urban Aboriginal organizations have succeeded in creating 'culturally vital' Aboriginal communities that create a sense of place and belonging for Aboriginal people. In addition to the explicit development of Aboriginal people's councils as a form of urban self-government, these individual organizations provide varying degrees of Aboriginal control within their respective sectors of service delivery. The last twenty years have been further marked by significant improvements in education, employment and income levels and the emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class. Within the overall context of these successful community developments, there nonetheless continues to be a number of key challenges, as discussed below, which will need to be addressed in order to more successfully realize the NAFC vision towards improving urban Aboriginal quality of life, governance, cultural distinctiveness, and participation in Canadian society.

4.1 Education and Income Disparities and the Persistence of Poverty

In outlining the ongoing challenges faced by urban Aboriginal communities across Canada, this section examines the persistent disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the areas of education and employment and the growing gap between the urban Aboriginal poor and the newly emergent Aboriginal middle class. As well, this section looks at the challenges of poverty as it relates to mental health, addictions, homelessness, urban Aboriginal over-representation within the justice system, and the prevalence of Aboriginal gangs, and families under stress. And lastly, this section explores some of the prevailing challenges to establishing urban Aboriginal governments in terms of 'ethnic mobility', lateral violence, community cohesion and the establishments of politically representative political processes.

In terms of demographic considerations, a recent report from Statistics Canada highlighted the fact that, in spite of educational improvements, the gap in highchool and university completion rates between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations have persisted in urban areas over the 2001-06 period,with gaps in university completion rates having grown during this period.[14] Moreover, in spite of improvements in employment and income levels for urban Aboriginal people, the gap in employment rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people did not decrease significantly over the last 20 years, with the exception of the cities of Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Sudbury where the difference narrowed by 7 to 10 percent (Siggner and Costa 2005, 7).

Working to parity on the issues of education and employment will be an important challenge over the next decade. From Table 2 we can see that when compared

[14] For further reading please see Fact Sheet: Urban Aboriginal Population in Canada at http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014298/1100100014302

to the total population in each of the selected cities, the urban Aboriginal population has lower employment rates (notwithstanding Ottawa), percentages of university degrees, and median incomes. The differences between median incomes for urban Aboriginal people and the general population are lowest in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Calgary, corresponding with lower differences in employment rates. Notably, the Aboriginal population within these cities (not including Calgary) also has the highest proportion of university graduates, linking higher income levels with post secondary academic achievement.

Table 3: Urban Aboriginal Population Indicators as Percentage of Non-Aboriginal Population (2006 Census)

Selected CMAs	Employ Rate % Difference	Medium Income Ab. as % of Overall	University Degree % Difference
Winnipeg	7	70.7	11
Edmonton	6.3	67.6	12
Vancouver	2.9	72.7	16
Toronto	0.4	90.2	14
Calgary	0.6	78.9	16
Saskatoon	12.9	63.1	8
Ottawa-Hull	-0.2	80.2	13
Montreal	1.8	80.8	11
Regina	11.8	60.9	10
Thunder Bay	8.7	60.7	6
Sudbury	3.4	71.9	7

In terms of employment and income, there has also been a growing polarization between the urban Aboriginal poor and those experiencing economic success. According to Siggner and Costa, in contrast to the 281% growth in the urban Aboriginal middle class making in excess of $40,000 per year, there has also been roughly twice (550%) that growth rate over the last twenty years of those working poor urban Aboriginal people who make less than $15,000 per year (2005:39).

The prevalence of a growing 'working poor' segment of the urban Aboriginal community points to the larger challenge of wide-spread urban Aboriginal poverty. According to Siggner, nearly half (47%) of the urban Aboriginal identity population lives below the low income cut-off (LICO)[15], compared to 21 percent within the non-Aboriginal urban population (2003, 128). As well, the percentage of urban Aboriginal people living below the LICO varies significantly across cities, with the worst cases occurring in urban Manitoba (58%) and Saskatchewan (59%) where over half the population is living below the LICO (128).

4.2 The Challenges Related to Mental Health, Addictions, Homelessness, and Criminality

The existence of wide-spread poverty and related challenges (particularly in the areas of health, homelessness, and over-representation within the justice system) emerged as a key finding in both the Ontario Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) and the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP), where 48% of UATF and 35% of TARP respondents earned less than $20,000 per year (2007, 145; 2011, 93).

More specifically in terms of health challenges, the UATF pointed to an over-reliance on emergency rooms and walk-in clinics as the main source of health for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario. The implication of this reality being the existence of significant gaps in health services for those suffering from mental illness and addictions who require long-term, continuum of care services (2007, 114).

[15] The LICO measures a household's ability to maintain a basic standard of living, allowing it to meet its shelter, food, and other costs in relation to the income received.

As well, the UATF found extensive waiting lists for both Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal social housing across Ontario and a growing reality of urban Aboriginal homelessness where over-representation in the homeless population was estimated at 25% on average (2007, 139). The UATF further pointed to the need for safe housing in order to help Aboriginal youth 'stay off the streets' and reduce their probability for gang involvement and for emergency shelters for women who as victims of violence are in need of protection (140). Identifying similar rates (28%) of over-representation in the homelessness population, the TARP study further confirmed Aboriginal homelessness as a pressing social issue in Toronto (2011, 259). Moreover, the TARP study found substance abuse and addictions, family issues, and emotional distress as the top three factors relating to Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto (270).

In terms of Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system overall, a recent Statistics Canada report indicated that in 2007/2008, Aboriginal people represented only three percent of the Canadian population, but made up 22 percent of those in custody.[16] These disproportionate rates are largest in the Prairie provinces where Aboriginal people accounted for 81% and 69% of those in custody in Saskatchewan and Manitoba respectively, while represented only 11 percent and 12 percent of those provincial populations. Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, and Thunder Bay have some of the largest rates of Aboriginal over-representation and also have the highest percentage of Aboriginal people living in extremely poor neighbourhoods (La Prairie 2002, 197). These rates of incarceration are also increasing over time as the Aboriginal in custody

[16] For further reading please see: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2009003/article/10903-eng.htm

population increased by 27.4% from 1997 to 2007 (Mann 2010, 233). Recent research has also shown that Aboriginal people are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be the victims of sexual assault, robbery or physical assault (Brozozowski 2006, 1).

In cities across Canada, the UAPS found that 50% of study participants had been involved with the criminal justice system as either a witness or a victim of crime, or by being arrested or charged with a crime (2010, 96). The TARP study further found a diversity of interrelated characteristics of those involved with the justice system including, high incidences of youth offenders, low relative levels of education and employment, experiences with poverty, homelessness and social isolation, and trauma, mental health and addictions challenges (325). The TARP study also reported that Aboriginal women in Toronto were more likely to be victims, while men identified more as offenders and that there is a high incidence of police and security guard racial profiling such that Aboriginal offenders are overcharged, while Aboriginal victims are undervalued (321).

Notably, the TARP findings mirror those of the Canadian Centre for Justice where the Aboriginal inmate population was found to share experiences with socio-economic disadvantage and are predominantly young, male, poor, unemployed, and less well educated (La Prairie and Stenning 2003, 183). As well, La Prairie's work points to the intra-community nature of Aboriginal crimes in that Aboriginal victims are much more likely to be assaulted by someone they know than are non-Aboriginal victims (2003, 188).

4.3 Families Under Stress, Youth Gangs, and the Challenges of Language Retention

The overall social disadvantage experienced by urban Aboriginal people also relates closely to the prevalence of families under stress and the emergence of youth gangs. The 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey: Family, Community, and Child Care pointed to some general trends in Aboriginal families across Canada, including larger families with younger parents; a larger percentage of single mother[17] households compared to the general population; the inclusion of extended family and community members in caring for children; and, a greater prevalence of low-income families when compared to the non-Aboriginal population.[18] In their 2007 report on 'Strategies to Address Child Welfare', the Native Women's Association of Canada related the decline of traditional family structures and the prevalence of single parent families to the overall oppressive processes of colonization,[19] which has resulted in the dramatic over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system.[20] In Canada, Aboriginal children constitute approximately 6% of the total child population, but typically comprise between 40% and 80% of children in foster home, group home, or institutional care (Gillespie and Whitford 2010, 151).

Both the UATF and the TARP study found a high prevalence of single parent families headed by women and a series of related difficulties being faced by children and

[17] For further reading please see: 2010, The Socio-Economic Conditions of Aboriginal Lone Parent Families in Canada: Understanding Diverse Realities, Jacqueline M.Quinless, Quintessential Research Group at: http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/fr/pdf/lone-parent-circumpolar-presentation.pdf & Department of Sociology, Camosun

[18] For further reading please see The 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey: Family, Community, and Child Care. Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division. Catalogue no. 89-634-X - No. 001 at: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-634-x/89-634-x2008001-eng.pdf

[19] In terms of the Indian Residential School System, the Sixties Scoop, the Indian Act, and the loss of land and the decline of traditional cultural activities and gender roles.

[20] For further reading see 2007, Native Women's Association of Canada. Strategies to Address Child Welfare: An Issue Paper at http://www.laa.gov.nl.ca/laa/naws/pdf/nwac-childwelfare.pdf

youth. More specifically, both studies pointed to the challenges that urban Aboriginal children and youth are facing in relation to unemployment; negative peer influence; uncertainty as a result of being removed from their communities; mental health and suicidal ideation; a lack of access to community and cultural resources; and, increasing gang involvement (2007, 124. 2011, 103). A significant finding of the TARP research was that Aboriginal families, children, and youth in Toronto are under significant stress due to poverty[21], inadequate parenting, addictions, difficulties at schools, single parenting, and the presence of urban gangs (2011, 100).

Recent statistics highlight an overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in gang life in Canada, such that 22% of all gang members in Canada are Aboriginal and it is estimated that there are between 800 and 1000 active Aboriginal gang members in the Prairie provinces, with the largest concentration in Saskatchewan (Totten 2010, 255). In 2010, the CBC reported that Aboriginal gangs and their related criminal activities of drug distribution, prostitution, and theft were proliferating eastward into Ontario and Quebec.[22] In terms of gang dynamics, Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson point to Aboriginal gang recruitment and expansion relating directly to conditions of Aboriginal poverty, family breakdown, and related social problems; and, Aboriginal over-representation in custody where high recidivism rates suggest extensive gang activity and recruitment within the prison system itself (2008, 62). Moreover, increases in gang activity often stems from inadequate parenting and family and community breakdown such that

[21] This corresponds with the findings of the 2006 study, 'Struggling for Success: Aboriginal Family Units and the Effects of Poverty in the Greater Toronto Area' that found high numbers (55%) of Aboriginal families on social assistance, accessing food banks (76%), and accessing shelters (75%).

[22] For further reading please see: 'Native Gangs Spreading Across Canada' at http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/story/2010/03/16/mb-native-gangs-manitoba.html

Aboriginal youth are drawn into gang life in search of a secure identity and the promises of peer support, loyalty, and protection (2008, 62).

However, despite stereotypes, which suggest the contrary, not all Aboriginal youth are in gangs. Instead of turning to gangs as a substitute for their own families and communities, many Aboriginal youth are increasingly engaged in the learning and practicing of their traditional, Aboriginal cultures and ceremonies and in expressing this knowledge in contemporary urban ways. In addition to the many challenges of poverty, mental health, and addictions identified in both the UATF and the TARP studies, the TARP further highlighted the important contributions that Aboriginal youth are making in terms of being 'cultural helpers' and teachers within families as they are increasingly the ones who are exploring their identities through Aboriginal cultural expressions (2011, 110).

An important way that urban Aboriginal youth practice and come to understand their culture is through learning their language as a second language (Norris 2011, 249). This practice of 'second language learning' is becoming increasingly important in terms of the survival of Aboriginal languages in urban centres where home use is low. For a variety of reasons, including, the residential school legacy, ethnic mobility, cultural diversity (Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal), and living as a minority population within a vast majority of non-Aboriginal residents, Aboriginal language use is declining dramatically in Canadian urban areas. Relative to reserve communities, the engagement with Aboriginal languages is significantly lower in urban areas.

In spite of the importance placed on Aboriginal languages by urban Aboriginal community members[23], there has been an overall decline in already low language use in urban areas from 1996 to 2006 and a shift of proportion of use to reserve communities (Norris 2011, 290). Moreover, the percentage of those speaking an Aboriginal language at home dropped during this time from 4 to 2 percent, signaling a major concern for Aboriginal language transmission in urban areas. Given the prevalence of language use within reserve communities, it is perhaps not surprising that those with the ability to speak an Aboriginal language are much more likely to move between reserve and urban areas; this contributes to what as been described as the 'churn effect' of high rates of Aboriginal mobility and ongoing reserve-urban connections[24] (Norris and Jantzen 2003:112).

4.4 Ethnic Mobility, Class Divisions, and Internal Discrimination as a Challenge to Community Cohesion

Adding to this complexity and as a further challenge to community building is the phenomena of 'ethnic mobility. 'Ethnic mobility' or 'ethnic drifting' is becoming increasingly understood as a key contributor to the high levels of urban Aboriginal population growth over the last three decades. In contrast to the early years or the 'first wave' of urbanization, recent urban Aboriginal population increases are not the result of the emigration of Aboriginal people from reserves to cities, nor are they a result of

[23] The UAPS (2010) and the UATF (2007) both reported on the high value place on Aboriginal languages by urban Aboriginal residents. Specifically, the UATF found that the vast majority (92%) of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario considered it important to be able to speak an Aboriginal language (2007, 83). For further reading please see: http://www.ofifc.org/pdf/UATFOntarioFinalReport.pdf

[24] Census 2006 data points to high rates of inter/intra urban movement for Aboriginal people, while the UATF (2007), UAPS (2010), and TARP (2011) research all found ongoing connections to communities of origin in terms of visiting family and friends and related social/cultural events.

natural increases relating to birth rates of a younger Aboriginal population already living in the city (Norris 2003, 62). Rather, these increases are the results of both legislative changes within Indian Act definitions of Status Indians and a marked change in the politics of identity.

In response to the effective political activism of Aboriginal women in the late 1970s and early 80s, the discriminatory rules governing the entitlement to Indian status (Section 12 of the Indian Act) were amended in 1985 with the passing of Bill C-31.[25] From 1985 to 1999, roughly 114,700 people were 're-instated' and registered under Bill C-31 accounting for a 35% increase in the national population of Registered Indians at that time (Clatworthy 2003, 86). As the previous loss of Indian status under the old Section 12 provision often meant a corresponding loss of the right to reserve housing, the majority of these 're-instated' status Indian women and their children were living at that time (and continue to live today) in urban centres (Peters 2006, 319).

Moreover, as a result of the 2009 McIvor decision which identified additional gender-based discrimination processes in the determination of Indian status (Section 6) of the Indian Act and the subsequent passing of Bill C3 as an amendment to the Act, it is further anticipated that there will be an additional 45,000 new Indian Status registrants within the next several years (McGuire-Adams 2011, 10). Although still unclear as to what existing Aboriginal populations will be affected the most by Bill C3 (Métis, non-Status Indians, First Nation Band members, and those with multiple identities), it is reasonable to suggest that, given existing restrictions to living in First Nation, reserve

[25] For further reading see Janet Silman's Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out.

communities, a significant number of those affected will already be residing in urban centres.

In addition to these legislative amendments, there has also been a significant upward trend in 'intragenerational ethnic mobility' such that, for a diversity of personal reasons, individuals are increasingly choosing to change their ethnic identity over time. Throughout the decade of 1986 to 1996, this particular form of ethnic mobility or drifting accounted for 41% and 56 % of the proportional growth of the North American Indian and Métis population growth respectfully (Guimond, E. 2003:43).

A second type of 'intragenerational ethnic mobility' occurs in families of mixed Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal parent families whereby the Métis identity of one or more of the children comes to be acknowledged only later in their life (2003:43). The recent 2006 census indicates that the general Métis population --the majority (69%) of who live in cities-- is on the rise and is surpassing the growth of the other Aboriginal groups. In 2006, an estimated 389,785 people reported that they were Métis, doubling the population (increasing by 91%) since 1996.

It is important to note that Aboriginal population growth due to ethnic mobility does not affect all cities with the same degree of intensity. In the Western cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Edmonton, population growth is largely attributed to natural (net birth rate) increases. Whereas in Vancouver, Calgary, as well as the cities of eastern Canada, ethnic mobility plays a much larger role in the recent grow of the Aboriginal population (Siggner and Costa 2005,14).

An important challenge to those urban Aboriginal communities where population growth relates closely to ethnic mobility lies in the socio-economic disparities between

those more mobile Aboriginal identities and those which are generally understood as being more stable. Although more research is needed in this area, existing analysis suggests that, as a relatively mobile and growing urban Aboriginal identity, the Métis also have the distinction of being the most successful Aboriginal group in terms of education and employment and account for a significant proportion of the urban Aboriginal middle class.

In their analysis of urban Aboriginal people and poverty in Canada, Wingert et al. point to both the higher risk of poverty associated with First Nations and Registered Indian populations as well as the relative advantages experienced by the Métis (2011, 122). In terms of the composition of the emerging urban Aboriginal middle class, Wotherspoon further found that across seven major cities in Canada, Registered Indians are significantly less likely than Aboriginal people generally to earn $40,000 and over (2003, 158). Moreover, in Toronto the TARP study found that 80% of the Aboriginal homeless population identified as Status Indians (2011, 263). Spence et al. further notes that in cities across Canada, the Métis are more likely to be employed and hold professional and managerial positions as well as have completed post-secondary education (2011, 95).

The 'Aboriginal ancestry' only population is also experiencing relative educational and employment advantage and can reasonably be understood as part of a growing[26], ethnically mobile category of Aboriginal people. In addition to more people

[26] Persons with Aboriginal ancestry—that is with at least one Aboriginal ancestor—represented 5.4% of the population in 2006, compared to 3.8% 10 years earlier. For further reading please see: 2011 Population Projections by Aboriginal Identity in Canada, 2006 to 2031, Demosim Team Report prepared by Éric Caron Malenfant and Jean-Dominique Morency Statistics Canada at: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-552-x/91-552-x2011001-eng.htm

deciding to indicate their Aboriginal ancestry in recent Census counts, the reporting of 'Aboriginal ancestry' itself tends to 'drift' to 'Aboriginal identity' when respondents move from answering the more generic Census questions to the more detailed Aboriginal People's Survey questions.[27]

In both the 1996 Census and the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples' Survey (APS), the Aboriginal ancestry population in urban centres across Canada, when compared to the urban Aboriginal identity population was more likely to have graduated from high school and have some postsecondary education; be employed and have a higher income; and, less likely to speak an Aboriginal language. The 2006 APS further revealed that the Aboriginal ancestry population was also less likely to receive social assistance and live in social housing as well as experience social problems such as family violence and drug and alcohol addictions (APS 2006)[28]. Overall, the socioeconomic differences between those more ethnically mobile Aboriginal people and those more stable categories raises questions relating to the longer-term demographic trends of urban Aboriginal people and points to increasingly complex communities.

In other words, there exists the real possibility that the growth in newly identifying urban Aboriginal people has contributed to recent upward socio-economic trends. The impact of ethnic mobility, although difficult to measure, should therefore be taken into account when critically assessing the many advances made by urban Aboriginal people over the last several decades in Canada, including the emergence of

[27] For further reading please see: Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: concepts and Methods Guide (Chapter 10) at: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-637-x/89-637-x2008003-eng.pdf

[28] Findings are based upon cross-tabulations with 'Aboriginal Ancestry' and 'Aboriginal Identity' categories across a diversity of 2006 Aboriginal Peoples' Survey questions.

the middle class. Moreover, these developments further raise a number of questions relating to community composition, cohesion, and a sense of belonging in urban areas.

One of the key findings of both the UATF and the TARP was that the urban Aboriginal middle class was experiencing significant levels of discrimination and lateral violence from within the Aboriginal community and was increasingly moving away from what it considered to be the urban Aboriginal 'social services' community (2007, 171). More specifically, the UATF found that although the middle class was looking to take part in cultural – educational activities, 'internal racism' against them from the less advantaged members of the social service community kept them from participating in agency sponsored events and enrolling their children in culturally-based schools (2007, 176). In Toronto, the TARP study found that, in spite of the history of middle class involvement in fostering urban Aboriginal community and institutional development, approximately half of the current middle class were not involved with the Aboriginal community, with many (61%) referring to the lack of agency services that meet their specific needs for cultural activities and professional associations (2010, 227). As well in Toronto the prevalence of 'lateral violence' from members of the social service community was also an important detractor from middle class community involvement (2010, 233).

Given the social advantage experienced by the Métis and their prevalence within the urban Aboriginal middle class as discussed above, a related finding from the 2010 UAPS reinforces this notion of class tension and separation in that the Métis were found to be more likely to have a sense of belonging to a non-Aboriginal community than were Status First Nations and the Inuit (UAPS, 51). Overall, a key recommendation within

both the UATF and the TARP was to address internal racism and other forms of discrimination and to establish urban Aboriginal cultural centres in order to meet the cultural needs of the middle class and to encourage their participation and contribution to the larger community.

4.5 Challenges to Urban Aboriginal Governance

Internal divisions and socio-economic disparities relating to identity, culture and ethnic mobility, all point to challenges to community cohesion as the basis of urban Aboriginal governance initiatives. As urban Aboriginal agencies work to establish control within their respective social service sectors, participate on municipal advisory communities, and collectively pursue their larger community interests as part of urban Aboriginal councils, some key challenges remain concerning internal as well as external political relations.

Internally, high rates of inter-urban mobility and continuing links to First Nations, wide-spread poverty, class tensions, and internal discrimination can reasonably be understood as challenges to collective feelings of belonging and community cohesion for urban Aboriginal people; without which the desire to associate politically and to seek collective political representation is undermined. Moreover, there are important structural barriers to the existing social service agency-based governance processes, which are not politically accountable by design. In other words, in spite of having boards of directors based within the community, the urban Aboriginal social service organizations that are also functioning in increasingly politically representative ways are nonetheless based upon a non-politically representative client – worker relationship. The

primary organizational goal then, is not to retain clients as if members of a political party per se, but rather to help and provide services to them until they are no longer in need of assistance. The basis of the client – worker relationship is therefore one of professional, confidential support rather than public, political association.

Externally, in spite of the 1995 Federal Policy Statement recognizing Aboriginal self-government as an inherent right protected under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, there is presently no formal legislative and/or funding agreement that recognizes the rights of urban Aboriginal councils in Canada. What does exist, however, is a lack of political will on the part of both the federal and provincial government to come to a formal agreement on their areas of responsibility and accountability to urban Aboriginal people. The federal government's position is that, through the application of the Indian Act, it is exclusively responsible for Status Indians within reserve boundaries (Hanselmann and Gibbins. 2002: 3). The provinces have, on the other hand, consistently put forward a position that Aboriginal people are legally the same as other urban people. According to this overall policy position, once Aboriginal people take up residence in urban areas, provincial responsibilities to them parallel those of non-Aboriginal residents and are thus 'needs based' rather than contingent upon a recognition of Section 35 Aboriginal rights. The implication of these divergent government positions is the creation of what is often referred to as 'policy confusion' for urban Aboriginal people resulting in inconsistencies and inequities in the provision of programs and services. As a result, not only are urban Aboriginal councils not recognized and supported as institutions of Aboriginal self-government, but the individual agencies that make up these councils are

consistently faced with short-term, unpredictable programming, and chronic underfunding (McCaskill and FitzMaurice 2007, 90).

The final challenge to urban Aboriginal governance, which may be considered as both internal, as well as external, is the political relationship between urban Aboriginal agencies and their governing councils and First Nations governments and their affiliated organizations. As discussed above, a significant proportion of urban Aboriginal residents maintain a diversity of familial and cultural links to their communities of origins. As a result of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Corbiere*, these links have also included the ability to vote in Band Council elections.

As well, an important dimension of the First Nations land claim process that impacts directly on urban Aboriginal communities has been the creation of the 'urban-reserve'.[29] In accordance with the federal 'Additions to Reserves' and 'Treaty Land Entitlement' policy, several land claim negotiations (primarily in Saskatchewan) have included the creation of reserve land within city limits. Governed as part of rural-based, First Nations reserve lands, albeit situated within city limits, urban reserves have thus far been created primarily as economic development initiatives for First Nation's members and are considered a growing trend in First Nations governance within urban communities (Loxely and Wien, 2003:222).

These ongoing connections have not however translated into institutional and government cooperation and coordination. Rather, a number of First Nations have

[29] For further information on the Long Plain First Nation's recently initiated urban reserve in Winnipeg please see: http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2012/02/02/long-plain-first-nation-lands-urban-reserve-in-heart-of-winnipeg/

assumed the responsibility for their off-reserve members and developed a diversity of First Nations -urban services agencies (Peters 2011, 17). Moreover, in 1999 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) resolved to create an Urban Issues Secretariat to create policy in this area. However, to date the AFN has had little involvement in urban First Nations issues (2011, 17).

5. Concluding Commentary

Urban Aboriginal communities in Canada are experiencing a number of countervailing trends. In keeping with the NAFC policy objectives towards an enhanced quality of life, self-determination, cultural distinctiveness, and Aboriginal participation in Canadian society, they are growing and thriving and are marked by experiences of cultural vitality, community development, socioeconomic advances, and clear movements towards institutional control and governance. At the same time, these same communities are faced with challenges of widespread poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions, family breakdown, criminality, youth gang involvement, and language loss. Moreover, the dynamics of 'ethnic mobility' intersects with internal class disparities to broadly link urban Aboriginal socioeconomic advances to a minority class of recent arrivals to the community. The tensions caused by this dynamic are expressed as 'internal discrimination' and lateral violence and result in a growing number of middle class, urban Aboriginal people who, in spite of seeking participation in culture and community, are moving away from the existing social service community.

The prevalence of poverty and its related hardships, combined with the dynamics of ethnic mobility and class conflict, function as challenges to overall feelings of belonging and urban Aboriginal community cohesion, as the basis of collectively seeking political representation and governance. Without internal community consolidation and support, it will be difficult to address the additional challenges to urban Aboriginal governance initiatives such as the need for more politically representative urban councils as well as the absence of any formal recognition from both the Canadian government and First Nations. Ultimately, in looking to further fulfill its mandate and realize its policy

objectives, the National Association of Friendship Centres will need to focus on these areas of urban Aboriginal community development.

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