



Institute On  
Governance    Institut sur  
la gouvernance

**ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE IN URBAN SETTINGS:  
WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**A report of:**

**The United Native Nations  
The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg  
The Institute On Governance**

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*The views expressed in this publication are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute On Governance or its Board of Directors.*

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Our current activities fall within these broad themes: building policy capacity; Aboriginal governance; accountability and performance measurement; youth and governance; citizen participation; governance and the voluntary sector; and technology and governance.

In pursuing these themes, we work in Canada and internationally. We provide advice on governance matters to organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors. We bring people together in a variety of settings, events and professional development activities to promote learning and dialogue on governance issues. We undertake policy-relevant research, and publish results in the form of policy briefs and research papers.

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# ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE IN URBAN SETTINGS: WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### ***A. The Conference In Brief***

The conference, *Aboriginal Governance in Urban Settings: Working Together to Build Stronger Communities*, was held at the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver on March 7-9, 2002. Conference organizers were the United Native Nations of British Columbia, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Institute On Governance. The 2002 conference built on the work of the first conference on Aboriginal governance in urban settings, held in Winnipeg in 1998.

The objectives of the conference were threefold:

- To stimulate the creation and sharing of knowledge among participants on the topic of Aboriginal governance in urban settings;
- To help establish networks among participants that will endure after the conference ends; and
- To stimulate the creation of plans for action among participants.

Approximately 165 individuals attended the conference including delegates, speakers and volunteers. Delegates came from across Canada and had a wide variety of affiliations – the non-profit sector, various levels of government, the private sector, educational institutions. Some came in their individual capacities.

For the first two days of the conference, plenary sessions in the morning, featuring speakers and panelists, were followed by concurrent workshops in the afternoon. Workshop topics included, among others, models of Aboriginal governance, the federal First Nations Governance Initiative, The voluntary sector and governance, youth and governance, justice, urban Aboriginal child and family services, Aboriginal housing and homelessness and urban Aboriginal governance from an Aboriginal women's perspective.

Support for the conference was provided by fourteen corporate sponsors – seven departments and agencies from the federal government, the Government of British Columbia, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, the United Native Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal People, O.I. Group of Companies and Vancouver Urban AHRDA. Thanks to their support, conference organizers were able to lower the registration fee for delegates from the non-profit and municipal sectors. Further, a number of individuals were offered scholarships to attend the conference free of charge.

## ***B. Purpose Of The Report***

The organizers of the conference have written this report with several audiences in mind. First, the three organizations wanted to provide the corporate sponsors of the event with a brief record of what occurred and the results achieved so as to provide an accounting for the funds that they generously provided. Some sponsors provided their funds subject to certain conditions and organizers will respond to these sponsors with additional documentation for accountability purposes.

A second important audience is the conference delegates and those that volunteered their time to share their wisdom with the conference participants – the elders, conference speakers and panelists. Conference organizers hope this document will be useful reference material for their purposes.

Finally, judging from the enthusiasm of conference delegates, the theme of urban governance in urban settings has wide resonance across many sectors of Canadian society. Thus, there appears to be value in sharing the results of the conference with a larger audience.

The focus of this report will be on the plenary sessions, but it will also provide brief summaries of the workshops. Those wishing more information about the conference can visit the following web sites to obtain this report:

[www.iog.ca](http://www.iog.ca)

[www.unns.bc.ca](http://www.unns.bc.ca)

## II. SUMMARY OF DAY ONE PLENARY SESSIONS

Marge White, a member of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation and conference co-chair, joined Jason Wilson, youth co-chair from Winnipeg, in welcoming delegates to the conference. Emily Stogen, an elder from Musqueam Nation, conducted the opening prayer.

### ***C. Opening Remarks - The Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Government of British Columbia.***

The Honourable George Abbott began his opening remarks with greetings from the Government of British Columbia, and mentioned that the Government of B.C. was a contributor to the conference.

Mr. Abbott indicated that the goals of the conference are in line with those of the B.C. Government, and that there are many approaches to solving urban challenges. He stressed that there is a need for cooperation between the grassroots and government, and that in particular “we must seek a renewed partnership between urban Aboriginal organizations and the grassroots community.” He also suggested there are many shared goals, including effective delivery of services, better access to services, and improving the quality of life, education and health for Aboriginal families. For this to be achieved there also needs to be greater coordination within the provincial government and with the federal government.

Mr. Abbott provided several examples of provincial government initiatives to protect Aboriginal cultural programming, including the First Citizens Fund and the creation of a First Citizens Forum to advise government. Mr. Abbott closed by expressing his hope that the conference will be a “unifying, forward looking experience.”

Many of the questions from conference participants focussed around the First Citizen’s Forum and the selection of Aboriginal representatives. Mr. Abbott responded that the Forum will be an annual opportunity to look at what we’ve committed to and get an report card on what we are doing. The government will rely on many voices to go about ensuring representation, including youth. He also noted that the First Citizens Forum “is not meant to be a substitute for ongoing discussion.”

Other questions dealt with access to funding – for Aboriginal women’s programs, for youth programs and for HIV/AIDS. Although most of these programs are dealt with by other ministries, and Mr. Abbott could not provide specific information, he did indicate that the government is looking forward to any advice coming out of the conference.

#### **D. Keynote Address – Phil Fontaine, Chief Commissioner of the Indian Claims Commission and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations**

Mr. Fontaine was introduced by co-chair Jason Wilson. Mr. Fontaine began by thanking the Elder for the opening prayer, and the organizers of the conference. He then outlined the two topics of his presentation: the role of the Indian Claims Commission (ICC), of which he is Chief Commissioner; and the challenges of self-determination.

The Indian Claims Commission is a temporary, neutral body that deals with claims that have been rejected by Canada. The current land claims process is a “long, cumbersome, uncertain process.” To date up to 1000 claims have been submitted to Canada, and of those 442 have been accepted. The ICC, which has dealt with 52 rejected claims, may make recommendations but has no binding powers. Normally the ICC deals with specific claims based on treaties, but there are exceptions. Among the strengths are its community sessions, where representatives hear oral testimony from Elders (without cross-examination) and expert witnesses (who may be cross-examined), and its mediation unit. Canada is currently working on legislation for an independent claims body. Once this new body comes into effect, in approximately 18 months, the ICC will cease to exist.

Mr. Fontaine then moved on to the second topic of his presentation – the challenges of self-determination – and provided some history of self-government negotiations in Manitoba. In 1993 Mr. Fontaine talked with Ron Irwin about a new initiative for education, which resulted in the signing of a Framework Agreement in 1994. However, it soon became clear that the Framework Agreement needed to be taken further to include jurisdiction over education (not just administration), and also include jurisdiction over all issues important to Aboriginal peoples, such as land, justice, health and child welfare (everything that governments do now). With the restoration of First Nation jurisdiction would come the dismantling of Indian Affairs.

Now Aboriginal peoples are looking not just for programs and administration, but also law-making. In order for this to be achieved, Mr. Fontaine believes that the Indian Act must be repealed and there must be a restoration of jurisdictions. Eighteen principles were developed to guide negotiations, but eight years and \$40 million later “we have yet to sign an agreement that allows jurisdictional control over any area.” Why? Aboriginal people know what needs to be done, and have the capacity. But the process has been slowed down, in part due to Elders and other community members who are concerned that eliminating the Indian Act also eliminates the protections it provides. Mr. Fontaine believes that the Indian Act is archaic, and doesn’t protect Aboriginal rights. He offered, as an example, the number of land claims that have been rejected, and the amount of land that has therefore been lost.

Currently Aboriginal peoples are still faced with conditions they don’t deserve. One of the biggest is poverty, and there is an urgency to do something about it. Mr. Fontaine suggested that perhaps poverty should have been the focus of the agreement, since “it is not good enough to have political power, if you don’t have economic power.”

***“It is not good enough to have political power, if you don’t have economic power.”***



What steps need to be taken to reduce poverty? Mr. Fontaine suggests that it is not good enough to do things the old way, or other ways that are formula driven. Aboriginal people must be innovative. “There is no one right answer. There are many answers, and these answers are within our communities.” We have to reach out to everyone and believe that everyone has a stake in this process. Everyone is affected. Everyone should benefit.” With poverty and scarce resources Aboriginal peoples have become territorial, and this must end. To effect change Aboriginal peoples must work together.

***“Go out and tell stories about what we’re doing, and how we’re doing it, and why we are so successful. And then reassure people that we have the know-how, the capability and the capacity to effect change.”***

Mr. Fontaine concluded with a look to the future. “Go out and tell stories about what we’re doing, and how we’re doing it, and why we are so successful. And then reassure people that we have the know-how, the capability and the capacity to effect change.” Success stories will instill confidence in Aboriginal people and will reassure those investing that the investment will reap benefits for Aboriginal peoples and society.

#### ***E. Panel Discussion – “Visions and Practical Steps – Moving Forward”***

The panel consisted of Terri Brown, President of the National Women’s Council; Jose Kusugak, head of the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.; and Scott Clark, President of the United Native Nations.

Ms. Brown began her presentation by thanking the Coast Salish people of Vancouver for allowing the event to be held on their land.

Ms. Brown then outlined a number of key points she wished to make. Among these points are that Aboriginal women’s rights are critical to self-government; that current government structures are flawed and need to go; that nationhood must be determined by Aboriginal peoples; and that gender parity is essential – there must be a role for women. The colonizer mentality in Aboriginal leadership “must be crushed,” as it is this system that eliminated the role of women. The leadership across Canada is primarily male. They believe the Indian Act belongs to them. It does not – it is foreign. “European oppression has divided us [Aboriginal] men and women and it’s time to talk seriously and achieve some progress and not be enemies.”

Ms. Brown believes that matrilineal culture has been misplaced, and emphasized the importance of oral tradition. Women “need to take on the role of educator again.” Educated Aboriginal women need to organize and to challenge ideas. Ms. Brown also pointed out the issue of salary disparity and that “women must be paid what they’re worth.” Ms. Brown concluded her presentation with remarks directed at the First Nations Governance Initiative. She believes that Minister Nault has a very narrow view, and does not want to address the issues that Aboriginal women want to discuss.

Mr. Jose Kusugak began his presentation by indicating the increasing importance that is being placed on urban issues by the Inuit. There are many Inuit that now live in the South, including

600 that live in Ottawa. The Inuit must learn from other Aboriginal groups dealing with urban issues, and the conference provides an opportunity to do that.

Inuit people sometimes choose to stay in the South, since there may be greater employment and educational opportunities. Therefore “it is important for the Inuit to become part of the greater Southern mosaic.” Mr. Kusugak closed by indicating that more work needs to be done to find out how many Inuit are in the South. To this end, they are involved in a co-project with Laval University.

Scott Clark, a Board Member of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) began his presentation by offering the apologies of Dwight Dorey, President, CAP. He then welcomed everyone to the Coast Salish Nation territory.

Mr. Clark then made reference to the Corbiere decision, which ruled that the Indian Act discriminated against off-reserve Aboriginal people. Close to 80% of Aboriginal people live off-reserve, and to close to 50% live in urban settings. While there is often a policy vacuum for First Nations, the gap is even greater for urban Aboriginal peoples. However, urban Aboriginal issues are a hot topic, as demonstrated by the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. In addition, Aboriginal population growth means that Aboriginal people are “a force to be reckoned with.”

***Aboriginal population growth means that Aboriginal people are “a force to be reckoned with.”***

Mr. Clark expressed concern that various levels of government have divided Aboriginal peoples, and that a new way must be found. “Our leaders of the past have set the stage for you and I to start implementing a strategy for working together.” People want to talk about real issues – jobs, homelessness, HIV/AIDS etc.

Mr. Clark concluded with two points. First, the Aboriginal right to self-government must be protected. If the federal government will not, then Aboriginal people must. Second, a conference on Aboriginal urban governance should happen each year.

A number of questions and comments were offered to the panel members. One participant commented that the divisions between Aboriginal peoples have been caused by national political organizations trying to control service delivery. Politics should not take over programs. Mr. Clark responded that political organizations should not take over service delivery, but politics and service delivery should be integrated to ensure a stronger voice. Mr. Kusugak added that his organization is not involved in service delivery, but focuses on claims.

A conference participant from Alberta directed a comment to Ms. Brown concerning the role of young women, and their need to understand that they have a lot of responsibilities. Ms. Brown responded that many young women do not have the benefit of growing up in their own culture – they need role models. That said, young women do need to take initiatives as well.

Another participant questioned Scott Clark on the welfare cutbacks in British Columbia. Mr. Clark answered that Aboriginal organizations must make sure in their negotiations for funding that they have sufficient capacity, and are not just administering poverty.

One participant commented that Aboriginal peoples must work together as a community to face challenges (HIV/AIDS), while another stressed that Aboriginal people should not let the federal government push responsibility onto the provinces (eg. health care). A youth participant made the point that young people need to be empowered to lobby for education (eg. to avoid nepotism of band councils). Finally, a representative of the B.C. Metis Provincial Council said that their organization is interested in an integrated approach (as opposed to a pan-Aboriginal approach), and is prepared to work with other groups in B.C. on these issues.

#### ***F. Luncheon Speaker – Lucie McClung, Commissioner of Correctional Services Of Canada***

Ms. McClung was introduced by co-chair Marge White. Ms. McClung began her presentation by indicating that she hadn't been sure what she could say to the conference, but then realized that as Commissioner of Correctional Services of Canada she has too much to say about Aboriginal peoples, due to their over-representation in the corrections system. She then affirmed the theme of the conference, "building stronger communities," as it speaks to quality of life. She also drew attention to the Speech from the Throne, and the commitment made to address the issue of Aboriginal people in the corrections system.

Among the facts and statistics that Ms. McClung quoted were that Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginals to have contact with the police, and that in Saskatchewan the incarceration rate for Aboriginal people is 1,600 per 100,000 people compared to 48 per 100,000 for non-Aboriginals. "This is not a picture of the future that captures the imagination of young Aboriginal people."

***"This is not a picture of the future that captures the imagination of young Aboriginal people."***

Ms. Clung also stressed that for change to occur "we must truly work in partnership to create a greater good for Aboriginal peoples in Canada." She then pointed out the importance of culturally-centered programming, and its success at the community level, including educational programs, diversion methods and healing lodges. Ms. McClung concluded her presentation by stressing that while the focus over the past ten years has been on improving program capacity, the focus must now be on preparing Aboriginal offenders for the reintegration process. "I am impressed with the responsibility Aboriginal communities show toward supporting those returning from the correctional system."

### III. SUMMARY OF DAY ONE WORKSHOPS

#### **A. Models of Aboriginal Governance**

The workshop leaders were John Graham of the Institute On Governance, and George Munroe of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

Mr. Graham began his presentation by conveying the results of Institute On Governance research on ethnic communities. There are many interesting parallels between the experiences of ethnic communities in Canada and indigenous peoples. For example, the resonance of experiences between the Jewish community and those of indigenous peoples are striking. Mr. Graham also briefly mentioned the work of Alan Cairns and the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Both looked at ways in which indigenous peoples could become a part of Canada without relinquishing their culture and identity.

Mr. Munroe began his presentation by reflecting on the history of Aboriginal governance. Indigenous peoples at one time had their own structures and institutions, and there was a different relationship with government and land. He indicated that comparisons with the ethnic communities can only be drawn to a point. Ethnic communities had the same values as the country they came from; successfully managing the “Canadian mosaic” was thus very different. In addition, relative to other ethnic communities, there are many more barriers that indigenous peoples face in moving toward self-government, including less homogeneity than other ethnic groups, and long-standing animosities among indigenous peoples (a result of colonization).

The unique history of indigenous peoples, and their status as a sovereign people, is the basis for their relationship with the federal government. Indigenous peoples now have a middle class (doctors, lawyers, teachers). Indigenous peoples are now developing the capacity to govern themselves. For example, in Winnipeg, there are 70 organizations focuses on services for Indigenous peoples. Mr. Munroe then presented eight possible models for urban governance, including service delivery, a school board within the provincial system, a centralized planning and advocacy entity and a “city within a city.”

***“There needs to be a process of building block by block.”***

Questions and comments from workshop participants focused on the roles of ethnic advocacy bodies, the limited importance of multicultural programming, the value of a community ethic or code, and that there are far fewer commonalities between ethnic communities than differences. Ethnic community governance evolves over time – “there needs to be a process of building block by block.” Other comments focused on the divisiveness of the Indian Act and the need to decide whether Aboriginal peoples are talking about a narrowly defined governance [such as that contemplated by the Indian Act] or jurisdiction over urban Aboriginal peoples. One participant compared model six – an urban self-government approach with a land base – to what is currently happening with the Westbank First Nation (near Kelowna, B.C.). A successful example.

## **B. The Voluntary Sector and Governance**

The workshop presenters were Wayne Helgason, Doreen Saulis and Damon Johnston of the Voluntary Sector Initiative.

Doreen Saulis began the presentation with a review of what the voluntary sector in Canada and what the Voluntary Sector Initiative are. The voluntary sector is very diverse, involving such fields as culture, social welfare, health, environment and international development. Some voluntary sector organizations have a very small budget and no staff, while others are large scale employers. The organizations can be urban, rural, in the east, west or north. Some organizations are informal, while others are legally incorporated entities. The sector consists of over 80,000 registered charities with 1.3 million employed and 6.5 million volunteers.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) was formed in 2000, with the goal of building a new relationship with government, and strengthening capacity and the regulatory framework. The VSI has a number of different components, including a Joint Initiative by the voluntary sector and government, Joint Tables (Accord, Capacity Building, Awareness, IT, regulatory framework, national framework initiative and joint coordinating committee), Voluntary Sector-only working groups (financing, advocacy) and other related work (eg. federal funding practices).

Wayne Helgason then spoke on his views of the importance of the voluntary sector. A million fewer people are volunteering than 10 years ago, and there is less support for voluntary sector organizations. This is not only a Canadian, but an international phenomena. However, the voluntary sector is necessary for protecting the values that communities feel are important.

The accord developed by the Joint Accord Table, of which Mr. Helgason was a member, created a statement of shared values and the opportunity for developing leadership within the sector. The process for developing and finalizing the accord was short, and included a first draft, followed by consultations with 21 communities across Canada, and then the launching of the accord on December 5th, 2001. The purpose of the accord is to define the relationship framework between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada, to have a statement of shared values, principles and commitments to guide the relationship, and to gain greater mutual understanding and cooperation. The accord is, in effect, “a Charter for the voluntary sector in Canada.”

Although the Aboriginal representation on the Joint Accord Table was limited (Wayne Helgason was the only representative), there was effective lobbying for the language on page 3 of the accord. Specifically, “Aboriginal people have a special place in Canadian society, and the content of this framework agreement needs to be interpreted or applied differently to reflect their point of view.”

***“Aboriginal people have a special place in Canadian society, and the content of this framework agreement needs to be interpreted or applied differently to reflect their point of view.”***

Governments come and go, and business cannot be relied upon to protect Aboriginal interests. Therefore, Aboriginal people must use the accord to further their interests. In particular, Mr. Helgason suggests that it is necessary “to make room for Aboriginal people to define services.” Aboriginal people no longer need other voluntary sector organizations to provide services to Aboriginal people – Aboriginal people can do it themselves.

Damon Johnston then spoke on the development of the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG). The ARG was created to ensure that Aboriginal voluntary sector voices were included as part of the VSI and the accord. The ARG is comprised of 20 Aboriginal individuals from across the country who participate in voluntary activities. It has had three meetings to date. Mr. Johnston believes that the ARG involvement in the VSI “ensures our involvement in the process is real.” So far the ARG has developed a terms of reference and work plan, has expressed concern with the VSI process and on the Accord, and has provided strategic advice and direction. It is also currently producing a video on what voluntary activity is from an Aboriginal perspective. Mr. Johnston also stressed that the ARG must get involved beyond Aboriginal organizations, and begin to influence more broadly.

Most of the questions raised on the VSI and accord concerned how Aboriginal people and voluntary organizations can get involved. Mr. Johnston suggested that Aboriginal voluntary sector organizations could participate in consultations that will soon be happening in Vancouver. The ARG is also looking at creating an Aboriginal version of the National Voluntary Organization (NVO) (and probably linked to it), and developing a national list of Aboriginal voluntary sector organizations. An Aboriginal NVO would encourage better sharing of information between Aboriginal voluntary sector organizations and allow for more effective national advocacy.

### ***C. Health and Governance***

The workshop was facilitated by Darlene Hall, Executive Director of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre in Winnipeg.

Ms. Hall began her presentation by briefly outlining the history and development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre. She then provided some statistics from the 1996 census in Winnipeg. Some of the statistics were that there were 60,000 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg and that 60 percent of people moving to Winnipeg are Aboriginal and most of these are youth.

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre uses the Medicine Wheel Life Promotion Framework. Their definition of health is “balance between mind, body, spirit and emotions.” Ms. Hall then provided and described a medicine wheel, and explained that the Framework for the Centre was developed primarily by Dr. Judy Bartlett. Dr. Bartlett was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from the University of Manitoba as a doctor, in 1988. She has been president of the Centre ever since.

The Centre practices a holistic approach, and values humility, sharing, caring, kindness, honesty, respect and trust. The goal of the Centre is to empower its constituents to become independent and self-sufficient. Most of the doctors and nurses at the Centre are Aboriginal. There are also traditional healers who offer their services at the Centre three days each month.

The Centre boasts cultural diversity, and their doors are open to everyone in the urban community. That said, approximately 55-60% of the people who use the Centre are Aboriginal. Among the many programs offered at the Centre are the Healthy Child Program; Head Start; Healthy Women; Men's Healing Program; Women's Healing Program; and the Wellness Health Centre.

#### ***D. Umbrella Organizations: Roles, Challenges and Opportunities***

Presenters at the workshop were Mary Richard, representing the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg; Ron George, a Board member of the United Native Nations; and Blair Harvey, Executive Director of the Vancouver Aboriginal Council.

Mr. George began his presentation by highlighting some of UNN's history. Prior to 1975 the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians (UBCIC) received significant funding (both capital and program). Then, in 1975 there were significant government cuts. At that time the government also insisted on having one organization to represent all the people. Although there were attempts to unite, they did not succeed. As a result, the United Native Nations was established. Among its many activities, the UNN initiated universal suffrage and encourage the development of programs at the grassroots level. The UNN was also a member of the Aboriginal Peoples Council, which eventually became the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Mr. George believes that the philosophy of all organizations joining without giving up autonomy is a good idea.

Mr. Harvey then spoke on the role of the Vancouver Aboriginal Council (VAC). The Vancouver Aboriginal Council was formed to bring service delivery providers into one room in a comfortable way. VAC is a "relationship" more than an organization. Mr. Harvey used the analogy of children in a sandbox – get along and share the toys – to express how he would like to see Aboriginal service delivery organizations in Vancouver work together. VAC is non-political and has no resources – it serves as a focal point for service delivery organizations in need of support. Mr. Harvey suggested that there needs to be an alternative to the current bidding process for projects, and that the Government of BC needs to work with Aboriginal groups to find a more cooperative approach. Aboriginal service organizations need to try and build partnerships with all levels of government. This can be difficult, however, since government generally sees clients instead of peers and partners.

Ms. Richard provided a brief history of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg (ACW). The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg was formed out of divisions between the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and the Métis, and disagreements over who represents urban Aboriginal peoples. Eventually the ACW came to represent urban Aboriginal peoples. The ACW focuses on politics and advocacy – it is not involved in service delivery, as those structures have been in place for

many years. Among the ACW's activities are community forums to discuss priorities, and an agreement with the Privy Council Office to study self-government in urban settings.

Mary Richard also told a story of her meeting with the previous Mayor of Winnipeg. At that meeting the mayor asked Mary what she wanted, and Mary responded "recognition, respect and opportunity." Soon after, the ACW gained recognition by the City as the voice of urban Aboriginal peoples. Finally, Ms. Richard also stressed that issues of need are more important than representation.

### ***"Recognition, respect and opportunity."***

The first question came from a Toronto representative. Currently there is good success in Toronto in terms of service delivery, but there is very limited community involvement. Now there is momentum, and the representative asked what advice UNN, ACW and VAC have for setting up an Aboriginal Council in Toronto.

Ms. Richard responded that Toronto doesn't need a large group to start. Have outreach workers recruit and encourage attendance at meetings. Scott Clark suggested that communication is key, and that Councils need to know what each other are doing and start to share information. Aboriginal organizations also need to get away from jurisdictional issues and focus on their fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal peoples and communities. Mr. Harvey noted that there is a place for representation and a time (particularly at the community level) to work with each other.

A question was also raised as to why VAC is not political while ACW is – why the difference? Mr. Harvey responded that VAC has the UNN to provide it with a political voice – an organization they can turn to and trust. In contrast, Ms. Richard pointed out that given the ACW's history with the MNC (no trust and no common voice) has driven the need for the ACW to be political. Finally, Scott Clark raised the point that the politics in BC and Manitoba are very different, as is the diversity of their Aboriginal population bases.

Finally, Fred Caron, ADM, PCO, asked how Aboriginal organizations and government can move beyond issues of representation, and keep the politics out of service delivery. Mr. Blair responded that there is a need to build long term relationships.

## ***E. Youth and Governance***

The facilitators of the workshop were Miali Coley, David DeCoine, Mark Fleming, Jamie Gallant and Ginger Gosnell.

To begin the workshop, the facilitators asked all the participants to turn their name tags around so that everyone was seen as an individual and not representing a particular organization. Next, Ginger Gosnell introduced the group to Roger Hart's *Ladder of Youth Participation*. The ladder places youth participation into eight different categories, gradually moving from "Manipulation" to "Youth-initiated, Shared decision-making with adults." Ms. Gosnell said she feels current



youth participation is at the low end of the ladder (decoration, tokenism), and that she would like to see it moved up to the Youth-initiated categories.

The group was then asked to explain what they wanted to get out of the workshop. This created a long list of items, including:

- how to integrate youth into our government/organization
- what youth issues are
- how do youth see themselves fitting into governance
- what is succeeding for youth
- how do we organize and come together when we come from many different backgrounds
- what is next for Aboriginal youth

The group then talked about current issues facing Aboriginal youth, and possible next steps. The main issues discussed were:

- homelessness and poverty;
- having a voice among the “adult” leadership and organizations;
- the lack of resources for youth-initiated projects;
- the need for youth to come together to organize;
- the need for youth empowerment, mentorship and leadership training; and
- how to get other youth involved.

In general, the group agreed they wanted to see youth recognized for their contributions in their communities. They wanted more support from their leaders and communities to help them develop their leadership skills. They reaffirmed the importance of working together as a group of young people, and not being caught up in divisive politics. They also emphasized communication and equality as essential ingredients to youth participation. “Traditionally, I believe youth were used for our enthusiasm, energy and strength,” said one participant. “Youth were resource-gatherers. We want that role back, but we need support and guidance from our leaders and our elders.”

***“Traditionally, I believe youth were used for our enthusiasm, energy and strength,” said one participant. “Youth were resource-gatherers. We want that role back, but we need support and guidance from our leaders and our elders.”***

Finally, the group decided to make a presentation to all conference participants detailing the results of the workshop. The presentation was made after the *Provincial and Municipal Perspectives* panel on Friday morning. In it the group emphasized the need for young people to have a strong role in the community, and for their elders to pass on their experience and wisdom. “Youth need leadership training and mentorship,” said spokesperson Jamie Gallant. “We need encouragement, and the opportunity to help and not just be helped.” She stated the current frustration youth feel with leadership, and how they are ready and willing to become part of a collective team of youth, elders and leaders all working together. “Finally, why is it important to include youth?” asked Ms. Gallant. “Because young people are here to remind adults what they were fighting for in the first place.”

## **F. The Federal First Nations Governance Initiative**

The workshop focussed on the federal First Nations Governance Initiative (FNGI), and was led by representatives from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The FNGI is the federal government's effort to consult with First Nations and to legislate a new framework for First Nations governance. The new legislation will replace sections relating to governance in the Indian Act. The core subject matters to be included are:

- ◆ Legal Standing and Authorities
- ◆ Leadership Selection and Voting Rights
- ◆ Accountability

The impetus for these changes is twofold. First, it widely acknowledged that, in the contemporary context, the Indian Act is inappropriate. The Indian Act has been accused of having a colonial policy orientation. It is designed to act as a tool for federal government control rather than to promote effective First Nations governance. The Act is due for a major overhaul.

Second, The Supreme Court of Canada decision, *Corbiere*, has already started to dismantle the Indian Act and its provisions on governance. Specifically, *Corbiere* gave all First Nation members whose elections are held under the Indian Act, a voice in on-reserve governance, regardless of residency.

The FNGI was in large part a response to *Corbiere*. A primary focus has been consultations with First Nations with the aim of drawing up new legislation on governance. These consultations point to the need to fundamentally change the relationship between the federal government, First Nations and their citizens under the Indian Act from one defined by wardship and control to a contemporary intergovernmental relationship defined by the exercise of accountable and effective First Nation governance.

Many hope that *Corbiere* will be a catalyst for broader change in First Nations governance. Some see it as an opportunity to advance nation-building led by First Nations.

Areas particularly important to address through the FNGI and beyond:

- ◆ wider flaws in the current election regime
- ◆ political and financial accountability to First Nation membership
- ◆ a First Nation public service that is properly funded and removed from the political arena
- ◆ governance tools to promote healthy economies
- ◆ failure to support diverse traditional systems of governance
- ◆ the damage federal policies have done to nation-level governance systems

Throughout the consultation phase of the FNGI, a recurring finding was that community members want to be informed about, and engaged in, the affairs of their communities.

Participants in the workshop raised the point that although the federal government is leading the FNGI, they can not make all the decisions. First Nations must have a sense of ownership of the process and end product.

## **IV. SUMMARY OF DAY TWO PLENARY SESSIONS**

Mr. Ken Harris, an elder with the United Native Nations, provided the opening prayer.

### ***A. Opening Remarks – Ovide Mercredi, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.***

Ovide Mercredi began by speaking on the theme of community champions. “We have to create our own champions, lift them up, reinforce them, and not put them down.” He spoke about the importance of the grassroots champions, and the need for political leaders to be grounded in the work of the grassroots.

***“The only type of accountability that counts is ‘Am I doing what my people want me to do?’”***

“The only type of accountability that counts is ‘Am I doing what my people want me to do?’” said Mr. Mercredi. He then emphasized the importance of individuals coming together to set their own priorities and work towards new goals, rather than waiting for the federal government to define leadership goals. “Waiting around for government is not self-determination, that’s entrenching federal power.”

Mr. Mercredi called for a change in thinking among Aboriginal people and leadership. “You don’t have to be elected to something to be a champion. You don’t have to have a formal title to be a champion,” he said. “We have misled ourselves in our own thinking. A champion is not based on official, institutionalized leadership. A champion is born out of individual self-determination and individual merit.”

### ***B. Plenary Session – “Visions of Urban Aboriginal Governance”***

Plenary session speakers included Scott Clark, President of the United Native Nations; Calvin Hanselmann, a policy analyst with the Canada West Foundation; Wayne Helgason, President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg; and David Stevenson of the Vancouver Aboriginal Council.

Scott Clark is president of the United Native Nations, BC’s provincial Aboriginal political organization. He spoke about the plight of Aboriginal people as a “social crisis”, and said each person has a responsibility to address the needs and aspirations of those “on the ground”. He identified several challenges to this process. First, to identify those needs and aspirations, and

second, to identify partnerships across organizations and governments that will work to make things better.

Mr. Clark noted there is a great opportunity building for change. Eighty per cent of Aboriginal people in BC are living off-reserve, and 60 per cent of Aboriginal people in BC are under 25. “We must ensure we are not treated the same as before,” he said. “We have to start unifying and speaking together in one voice.”

***“We have to start unifying and speaking together in one voice.”***

Calvin Hanselmann is a policy analyst at the Canada West Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan research institute. He spoke about the Canada West Foundation’s work within the Urban Aboriginal People Research Initiative. He discussed several findings and documents, all of which are available to participants on the Foundation’s web site ([www.cwf.ca](http://www.cwf.ca)).

In particular, Mr. Hanselmann reported the Foundation’s research had discovered urban Aboriginal policies in some, but not all areas of government, and large policy gaps in the areas of income, human rights and housing. They also looked at programs targeted to urban Aboriginal people and discovered overlap between federal and city jurisdictions. Mr. Hanselmann also noted these programs were difficult to find, and often governments, non-profits and Aboriginal groups were not aware of the programs available.

He concluded the real issue is not a lack of policies and programs, but inconsistency across areas. “No federal or provincial government is willing to take responsibility,” he said. “But, this policy vacuum offers an opportunity for urban Aboriginal people to fill these gaps.”

David Stevenson began by stating that urban Aboriginal people are at a crossroads between cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity. He explained how research on youth suicides in BC discovered that while some Aboriginal communities had suicide rates 800 times the national average, others were the same or lower than the national average. “This means there is nothing deficient in our youth,” said Mr. Stevenson. “The deficiency is in our communities.”

Mr. Stevenson then went on to demonstrate that in communities with all six “markers of cultural continuity” — land claims, self-government, educational services, police and fire services, health services, and cultural facilities — the suicide rate was the same as the national average. He stated there is a great need among urban Aboriginal people to develop a “language of cultural continuity” that reflects our culture and values within the context of self-government.

Wayne Helgason has been a leader in the Winnipeg area for almost 30 years. He spoke about current challenges to leadership, and opportunities to move forward. Mr. Helgason noted he is often skeptical of government, but has developed a sense of confidence in the Canadian people. He emphasized the importance of preparing Aboriginal youth for leadership and to carry the message forward.

Mr. Helgason said Aboriginal groups must use research (from inside and outside) to create an impact in the policy environment and program delivery. “There is a real opportunity here to set

the agenda through research and moving forward.” He noted challenges exist to provide support for youth, women and those in the community who face greater challenges, and said leadership must be broadened. “We must recognize the capacity among us, and use this to support one another.”

### **C. Panel Discussion: Provincial and Municipal Perspectives on Current Issues and Challenges**

Panel members included Sam Sullivan, a Councillor with the City of Vancouver, Dan Vandal, a Councillor with the City of Winnipeg, and the Honourable Eric Robinson, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for the Government of Manitoba.

Mr. Sullivan spoke of his own experience with government when he became a quadriplegic. He was stunned to see how government treats marginalized people. “I was looked on as a collection of needs or problems instead of a whole person.” Government services are based on meeting specific needs and not supporting people with assets. Mr. Sullivan indicated that he was looking forward to learning more about urban Aboriginal peoples and the issues they faced.

Mr Vandal began his presentation by indicating that urban Aboriginal issues are the most important issues facing Winnipeg today. The Aboriginal population of Winnipeg is the fastest growing in Canada. In addition, Aboriginal people are over-represented in negative statistics. Aboriginal populations in cities are not recognized like First Nations. To achieve recognition Mr. Vandal suggested that urban Aboriginal peoples need both political representation and discussion, and community grassroots support.

Mr. Vandal then discussed a number of areas where Aboriginal peoples and the City of Winnipeg can and do work together. First, The City of Winnipeg can offer respect and recognition to Aboriginal communities. Second, the issue of urban reserves is very important in the economic development strategy for downtown Winnipeg. Third, housing partnerships are important. There is a housing crisis in Winnipeg, and the city has developed partnerships with Aboriginal housing groups. Four, Aboriginal people need better representation at City Hall. Mr. Vandal concluded by stressing that the common links between the province and city have never been more positive, and this can only make the city stronger. He provided, as an example, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Manitoba, which both the province and City of Winnipeg support.

The Honourable Eric Robinson began his presentation by providing some information on his family and personal history. He then moved on to provide his perspectives on urban Aboriginal peoples and their relationship with the federal government. “The federal government doesn’t want us when we’re off the reserve, and the province doesn’t want us because we are a federal responsibility.” However, jurisdictional issues need to be put aside. The federal government should deal with First Nations on a nation to nation basis.

***“The federal government doesn’t want us when we’re off the reserve, and the province doesn’t want us because we are a federal responsibility.”***

Mr. Robinson then moved on to some issues specific to Aboriginal people in Manitoba. First, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) recently looked at how the justice system relates to Aboriginal people. The province is committed to the findings of the AJI. Second, Manitoba has two cabinet members who are Aboriginal. Third, in terms of child welfare, the Manitoba government must transfer the responsibility to the First Nation and Métis people of our province. In 1992, the province signed the Child Welfare Agreement to allow Aboriginal control over how our children are treated. Fourth, “we must make efforts not to forget about those who are imprisoned. Women as well. In Manitoba, 95% of the people in the women’s jail are Aboriginal.” Mr. Robinson concluded by saying again that “we have to put aside jurisdictional issues and put our heads and good thoughts to deal with these issues.”

***D. Luncheon Speaker – The Honourable Stephen Owen, Secretary of State  
(Western Economic Diversification)***

The Honourable Stephen Owen began his presentation by explaining how he came to be involved in Aboriginal issues. Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Robert Nault approached Mr. Owen in his quest for support with a particular emphasis on education, economic development and treaty negotiations. Young people are our future, and by providing them with the educational opportunities needed we will “stimulate their drive to succeed.” The drop out rate of Aboriginal children is tremendous – we must work on this head on. To achieve this, the cultural needs of Aboriginal children must be at the forefront.

Mr. Owen then moved on to the role economic development plays in the advancement of Aboriginal people in Canada. Under the leadership of Minister Nault, 125 million dollars has been put aside for an economic development fund. The formation of Aboriginal businesses has been rapid over the past several decades – one estimate puts the number at 20,000. To advance the quality of life of Aboriginal people we must work to draw on these success stories.

Self-determination cannot be provided through treaties if the tools to do so are also not given. The challenge of urban Aboriginal people increasingly points towards health of our urban areas. British Columbia’s bid for the 2010 Olympic winter games has been the impetus for the Squamish people to develop a 13 million dollar cultural development centre in the Whistler village. This type of sustainability will help Aboriginal peoples’ goal of self-governance.

Governance is a small block to building capacity in the areas of education, health and overall for better quality of life for Aboriginal people. Communities must design and support the development of programs starting at the grassroots level. Abject poverty impedes the strength and resolve of Aboriginal people. Imagination and creativity are key steps towards building effective relationships. Social justice and full expression of Aboriginal rights are the most important issues affecting all Aboriginal people.

Conference participants had a number of comments and questions for Stephen Owen. A youth participant commented that governments have been dishonest and have lied to Aboriginal people. Some Native youth in BC have been the target of false media perceptions such as being

compared to the Palestinian youth. Are Aboriginal people going to be able to participate in the design of the policies that affect Aboriginal lives?

Mr. Owen responded that historical injustice should be and is recognized everywhere in Canada. With the media's portrayal of politicians we [politicians] are often under reported and over-expressed when we speak and are not necessarily given the opportunity to go in depth about our comments. With the effects of inter-generational despair inevitably there will be social issues. We must build a healthier society by working together.

Several conference participants suggested that the Canadian government is not going down the right road for Aboriginal governance with the current process of the First Nations Governance Initiative. Mr. Owen responded that Mr. Nault views the First Nations Governance Initiative as an important step in working towards legal and economic independence of the Indian Act. More importantly there are committee meetings of the Joint Ministerial Advisory Committee (JMAC) to support the development of true self-governance. We must move on both tracks at once to allow Aboriginal people work out their problems of self-government now.

## **V. DAY TWO WORKSHOPS**

### ***A. Governance in Urban Aboriginal Child and Family Services***

Workshop presenters were Ken Richard, Executive Director of the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto; the Honourable Eric Robinson, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for the Government of Manitoba; Wayne Helgason, Executive Director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg; the Honourable Gordon Hogg, Minister of Child and Family Development for the Government of British Columbia; and Stan Parenteau, Executive Director of the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Service Society.

Ken Richard is the executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST). The NCFST is status-blind, unaffiliated with any particular political or cultural group, and has a strong focus on prevention. Mr. Richard noted six ingredients that have made the NCFST a success:

- 1) They developed a clear vision from the very beginning.
- 2) They rejected affiliation with the mainstream.
- 3) They remain apolitical.
- 4) They have a highly diversified funding base.
- 5) They maintain a positive stance on cooperation with other organizations.
- 6) They place an emphasis on culture and prevention.

Next Mr. Richard outlined some fundamental challenges for the organization, including questions of autonomy, cultural integrity and authority issues. Finally, Mr. Richard looked at some outstanding questions and concerns of the organization:

- Toronto population is very culturally diverse with many different needs.

- Staffing, training and capacity issues (eg. How do we find more Aboriginal staff)
- Overwhelming degree of need.
- Absence of demonstrated models unique to the urban Aboriginal context.
- Relations with First Nations.
- Client choice (eg. how do we convince people to come to us?).

Minister Robinson talked about Aboriginal children within the child welfare system in Manitoba. In the 1980's the Child Welfare Act was changed to allow Aboriginal people to develop their own child welfare agencies, but this was restricted to on-reserve families. Then in the 1990's the ability to control child welfare agencies was expanded to off-reserve families, and a budget of \$100 million was transferred to Aboriginal and Métis people to build their own child and family services organizations.

Mr. Robinson also spoke about the 3,000 Aboriginal children who were adopted out of province — and sometimes out of country — during the 1980's, and the struggle to reintegrate them with their families and communities. He said he hopes current work toward Aboriginal-run child welfare agencies will end this type of disaster.

Wayne Helgason has worked as a social worker and supervisor for many years. He noted that 70 per cent of all children in care in Manitoba are Aboriginal. He said in the beginning there were no Aboriginal employees in child welfare. “The middle-class, euro-centric approach remained the same, and the numbers [of Aboriginal children in care] went up.”

Mr. Helgason noted current changes to the child welfare system in Manitoba are creating new challenges. First, there must be more Aboriginal social workers available. Mr. Helgason said the schools of social work must change, and more training provided in Métis and First Nation communities. Second, there is a lack of models for this type of organization. The only other Métis child welfare agency is in Alberta. Third, steps must be taken to ensure values and culture are truly represented in these services, and it is not just a new arm for the status quo.

Minister Hogg spoke about the BC provincial government's approach to reforming child and family services. He emphasized the need for communication between people, communities and peoples, and stated his government's commitment “is to work with your wisdom and with honesty toward keeping children in their Aboriginal homes.” Minister Hogg said the provincial government has three responsibilities toward this process: funding, ensuring a standard of care, and accountability. He said when these three things are in place, the government will move forward with the devolution of services to Aboriginal organizations.

Stan Parenteau is the executive director of the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Service Society (VACFSS). Mr. Parenteau spoke about the establishment of the VACFSS and its current work towards taking control of child and family services by 2003.

Mr. Parenteau noted three main challenges to this work. The first was staff recruitment, especially Aboriginal and culturally-sensitive staff. The second is around facilities. The VACFSS will assume leases from current government-run organizations. “But, we don't want the community to see us as the same old system,” said Mr. Parenteau. “We need the people to



feel comfortable coming through our doors.” Finally, Mr. Parenteau spoke about the challenge of re-contracting services to be delivered by Aboriginal communities.

Participants then asked the panelists many questions around devolution of services, community consultation, legislation changes, and strengthening the “kinship” model of child care. Most of these questions were directed to Minister Hogg of the BC government. Minister Hogg reaffirmed his government’s commitment to working with Aboriginal communities to develop new child and family services, and emphasized its cautious approach to legislative changes and budget cuts that impact Aboriginal families.

## ***B. Employment and Training***

The presenters at the workshop were Tara Gilbert of the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS); Marileen McCormick of the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development; and Heather Johnston of Miziwe Bick Aboriginal Employment and Training.

Ms. Gilbert began her presentation by providing a brief history of the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS). She then described ACCESS’s mandate as “to provide employment and training programs and services that enhance the participation of urban Aboriginal people in labour market activities.” Its key initiatives are a Research and Development Program and a Partnerships/Strategic Alliance Building Program. ACCESS is committed to providing unique programming that blends global best practices to meet the diverse needs of its clients and the demands of the labour market. They have done this by creating an Industry Advisory Council, social enterprise projects and e-learning centres. Ms. Gilbert provided examples of each of these, including a Corporate Circle (comprised of unions, governments and employers), the Musqueam Café Chef Training Program, and e-learning employment readiness training, all of which enhance the participation of urban Aboriginal peoples in the labour market.

***The vision of ACCESS is “to become a choice provider of Aboriginal talent.”***

The vision of ACCESS is “to become a choice provider of Aboriginal talent.” To achieve this they have set up an interactive database for employers and job seekers; customized demand-based industry training; and expanded their capacity to sustain themselves. Self-sustainability is of increasing importance, as they would like to continue to provide services even after government funding stops in 2004.

Marileen McCormick of the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development in Winnipeg began her presentation with the fact that while new jobs are available in Winnipeg, most require post-secondary education. Fifty-four percent of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg does not have a grade 12 education. The Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development is a community-driven, non-profit human resource development organization, whose focus is “helping urban Aboriginal people become employed.” The Centre has a five year funding

agreement with Human Resources Development Canada to provide labour market development services for its constituents.

The Centre provides a number of programs and services and has a staff of over sixty Aboriginal people. The Centre provides a combination of in-house, community-based and institutional programs, focusing both on education and employment. Among the many employment-related programs offered by the Centre are special services for Aboriginal people with disabilities, special services for individuals who have recently been released from incarceration and staff solutions geared toward Aboriginal graduates, professionals and post-secondary summer students. In addition, some of their in-house training programs include computer technician; machine operator, early childhood education; and a woodworking and carpentry program.

Heather Johnston of the Miziwe Bick Aboriginal Employment Training Program, explained that the program was established in 1991 by the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, so that they could attain a greater quality of life. The program offers job training, career counseling, and apprenticeships for the trades etc. They also help with resume writing, interview skills, and job negotiation skills, and provide constituents with access to other resources, such as telephone, fax and computers. Ms. Johnston then showed the video "Gathering Water," which symbolized the ripple effect that employment can have on an Aboriginal community.

### ***C. Urban First Nations Reserves***

Chief Leonard George of the Tsleil Waututh Nation was the presenter at this workshop.

Chief George began his presentation by saying that Aboriginal people are the keepers of the land, and that this right comes directly from God. He stated that Aboriginal people have a responsibility for everyone and everything in the territory. He also indicated that this responsibility includes the health and well being of everything on earth, including the land, air, sea, minerals, resources, trees, and animals etc.

Chief George believes that Aboriginal people have an inherent right to self-government. With the Tsleil Waututh Nation Treaty, the First Nation is developing partnerships with anyone willing to help them make use of their territory for the betterment of the both partners' communities. Chief George spoke of the value of working with other people, and that "relationships make things work." Some self-governing initiatives his Nation is involved in are co-managing Cates Park with the city; negotiating with the city for the expansion of Canada Place to market and promote First Nations tourism; negotiating a K-12 school for First Nations in downtown Vancouver; and a partnership with Simon Fraser University and six others for the establishment of the Chief Dan George Centre for Advanced Learning, which has a culturally appropriate curriculum. Another initiative is an ongoing partnership with Chinese / Hong Kong investors, which has resulted in the construction of 600 condominium units over the last nine years.

## **D. Justice**

Workshop presenters were Gary Larkin of the Justice Canada; Jonathan Ruden of Toronto Aboriginal Legal Services; and Kent Patenaude of the Restorative Justice Portfolio in British Columbia.

***The Speech from The Throne commits Canada to take measures needed to “significantly reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system, so that within a generation it is no higher than the Canadian average.”***

Mr. Larkin began his presentation by indicating the Government of Canada’s commitment to justice in Aboriginal communities. The Speech from The Throne commits Canada to take measures needed to “significantly reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system, so that within a generation it is no higher than the Canadian average.” To meet this objective a number of initiatives and programs have been introduced, including a centre for victims issues, a native court worker program, a sentencing reform team and an Aboriginal Justice Learning Network.

In addition, one of the key federal-provincial/territorial partnerships for urban justice initiatives is the Aboriginal Justice Strategy (AJS). The strategy includes alternative measures and diversion protocols, including sentencing circles, advisory panels, mediation and dispute resolution for civil and family-child welfare cases, and support for Tribal Courts. Currently there are four AJS urban community-based initiatives, including the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Program (British Columbia) and the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (Ontario). Among the lessons that Justice Canada has learned is that justice initiatives must consider the socio-economic context. There is no quick fix, and future justice initiatives will require sustained research and evaluation.

Mr. Ruden began his presentation by explaining the purpose of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto. ALST is a one-stop shop for offenders who have come into contact with the law, and was created to meet the legal needs of Aboriginal people.

One of ALST’s recent initiatives is the Court Worker and Restorative Justice initiative with a *Gladue*-style court, held twice weekly. The *Gladue* court differs from regular court in that an individual’s history is given greater consideration, and there are opportunities to employ alternative measures. The goal of ALST in this process is to make sure clients find the appropriate services they need. Mr. Ruden stressed the importance of vigilance, relationship building and honesty in this process, as it is at the Crown’s discretion whether an Aboriginal offender is directed to the *Gladue* court or not.

Mr. Patenaude is the Manager of the Native programs department for the Restorative Justice Portfolio, BC. His role is to evaluate current programs and visit various program and services offered to urban Aboriginal people. He indicated that there is a large number of Aboriginal people that enter the criminal justice system and this number continues to grow. It is therefore important to find alternative measures such as the We’suwet’en Unlocking Justice program.

Recently an Aboriginal caucus that includes 15 native organizations, was formed. The caucus has found that current governing structures have limited their ability to work effectively. Through its meetings the caucus has stressed the need for community-driven Aboriginal programs, including a development phase that seeks to engage communities in dialogue. They also believe that additional resources should be directed toward healing programs rather than punitive measures.

### ***E. Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness***

Workshop presenters were Mel Buffalo, President of the National Aboriginal Housing Association and Marcel Swain of Lu'ma Native Housing Society.

Mel Buffalo of the National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) began his presentation by describing the ongoing frustration over the housing situation of many urban Aboriginal peoples. The movement to do something about it, which began in the early 1990s, grew rapidly when the Government of Canada got out of social housing in 1996. A few years later, the current version of the National Aboriginal Housing Association was formed with the support of urban centres across Canada. There has been ongoing reluctance on the part of government to act on housing issues, despite the growing problems. For example, in Edmonton in 2000 there were 2000 applications for 96 available social housing units. Housing is a high priority issue – and generally the first issue when Aboriginal people move to a city.

Mr. Buffalo believes there is a lack of respect for the homeless from everyone. He himself spent time in urban centres living as a “homeless” person, and feels there is a need to increase awareness. He sees the three challenges of NAHA as “bringing all levels of government to task, getting funding, and raising public awareness.” They have attempted to get all of the national Aboriginal organizations to work together, but have met with some roadblocks.

Now, NAHA is starting to see some support from the government on the issue of housing and homelessness. However, it is not just a question of providing funding, but also of providing opportunities for employment and economic gain. In addition, a number of funding initiatives will soon be expiring, and have been poorly accessed due to a long, bureaucratic process. There is a need to act, or this money will be lost. Mr. Buffalo concluded by inviting workshop participants to the upcoming AGA of the National Aboriginal Housing Association, which will be held in Hull, Quebec in April 2002.

Marcel Swain, of the Lu'ma Native Housing Society, spoke on the definition and causes of Aboriginal homelessness, and the Supporting Community Partnership Initiative (SCPI). Mr. Swain began by defining Aboriginal homelessness as those who have suffered from the effects of colonization and whose social, economic, and political conditions have placed them in a disadvantaged position. This group includes those who have no security of tenure, those who are living in substandard accommodation, those who regularly “couch surf,” and those who are frequently involved in street life. There is also a need to consider those at risk of homelessness, including those who suffer from substance abuse, those whose income requires them to use food

banks, and those who, because of systemic barriers, are unable to acquire accommodation of any kind.

The Supporting Community Partnership Initiative (SCPI) is the cornerstone of the Government of Canada's strategy to combat homelessness. This initiative encourages communities to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments and the private and non-profit sectors to address the needs of homeless people. The SCPI promotes a community-based approach. Among the priorities for Aboriginal communities are prevention, outreach and assessment, housing, advocacy, community and family support, and employment and/or income support.

Mr. Swain concluded his presentation by stressing that the need to renegotiate terms and conditions regularly and the competitive process for funding impede Aboriginal organizations from focusing on what is really important – helping those most in need. He also indicated that there is a need for more research on Aboriginal homelessness.

Following the two presentations there was a short general discussion period. Discussion focused on Vancouver's downtown eastside, and who is responsible for housing there. Conversation then moved to Aboriginal initiatives in Vancouver and Winnipeg. Finally, other questions and comments focused on the challenges of working with HRDC.

## **F. Building Governance Capacity**

Workshop presenters were Willie Seymour of the First Nations Governance Institute, John Graham of the Institute On Governance, and Brian Calliou of the Banff Centre.

Mr. Seymour began his presentation by indicating that names are very important to Coast Salish peoples. Historically, Coast Salish people had governance criteria that had been used for thousands of years. This was embodied in the term *snuw'uyul* – these were life's teachings. He then welcomed everyone on behalf of all the chiefs in the area.

Mr. Seymour then reviewed the concept of traditional governance. Traditional governance took place at many different levels – there was no institution and no classrooms. Families had moral obligations. There was no incarceration; people were able to reconcile through intermediaries who were brought to the community. The Big House was the institution that governed the whole community. This still exists today. Coast Salish have learned how to take traditional teachings and apply them to the modern world.

The First Nations Governance Institute (FNGI) wanted to look at governance from this perspective – from within the community. Mr. Seymour then described the origins of FNGI, leading up to Minister Nault's "freezing" of funds. He indicated that people are still working to find alternative funding sources.

Brian Calliou, Associate Director of the Aboriginal Leadership Program at the Banff Centre, described the need for leadership training with federal government devolving more powers to Indigenous communities. The Banff Centre has several goals, including presenting concepts,

ideas and models, increasing leadership behaviours and providing courses aimed at mid-level managers.

Mr. Calliou then discussed the tradition of leadership within First Nations. Leaders were visionaries, knew themselves, often generated dialogue, were sharing and respectful, and were action-oriented. The context behind the Banff Centre is indigenous nation-building; indigenous peoples must take control to be self-governing. Mr. Calliou concluded by describing the Harvard project and some other programming ideas.

John Graham began his presentation by describing the philosophy of the Institute On Governance: to promote sound governance through creating, sharing and applying knowledge. The IOG Aboriginal governance theme focuses on strategic planning, constitutions and self-government, and the research they conduct focuses primarily on case studies and tend not to be “academic” in nature. The IOG also believes in the importance of public education, and make effective use of workshops and its web site to distribute information.

Mr. Graham then discussed the importance of synergies between themes and activities. It is important to have good research and advice-giving capacities that underlie training activities so that they remain current and fresh. The IOG believes that the research conducted by Harvard has important insights for First Nations in Canada. If there is an interest in long-term socio-economic viability Aboriginal peoples must think about governance. In terms of capacity building Mr. Graham stressed that money alone is not the solution. Developing effective governance requires a sustained, long-term effort. In addition, the emphasis should be on addressing problems at the level of organizations and “systems” (the provision of safe water on reserve is an example of a system involving a multitude of players). Too often capacity building comes down to “training” individuals, and as such will not provide for long term success.

Questions and comments from workshop participants focused on the reasons behind the freeze on funding for the First Nations Governance Institute and what efforts are being made to re-secure funding. Other issues raised included results from any case studies and research on economic development activities by indigenous peoples in urban areas, and concern in the turnover rate for First Nation governments. One participant suggested the need for conflict of interest guidelines as part of any governance strategy. Finally, a participant pointed out that before Aboriginal governments can become a reality, the Indian Act has to be challenged (particularly section 88 and 91.24).

### ***G. Urban Aboriginal Governance from an Aboriginal Women’s Perspective***

Workshop presenters were Penny Kerrigan, Executive Director of the Aboriginal Mother Centre and Valerie Chisolm of the Native Council of Prince Edward Island.

Ms. Kerrigan began her presentation by explaining how she came to be involved in the Aboriginal Mother Centre of Vancouver and some of the ups and downs of setting it up. The Aboriginal Mother Centre offers services to mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and caregivers of Aboriginal children and their families. Services include hot lunch and dinner programs, arts and

crafts, outreach and counseling services, workshops and events, an entrepreneur training program, a healing circle support group, and a children's play area.

The project started off with three people and is now at nine staff and growing. The Aboriginal Mother Centre is grassroots-driven, with the hope that the women who currently make use of the facility will someday take over running it. The Centre has the support of all three levels of government including the municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as support in the Aboriginal community and from local service providers.

Valerie Chisolm began her presentation by explaining that the Native Council of PEI is an organization that represents off-reserve Aboriginal people, and its activities are directed by its community's needs. The board of directors encourages Elder and youth involvement in meetings surrounding governance issues. Each and every person has something to bring to the forefront, so participation from as many people as possible is important.

The Child and Families Services authorities are in the beginning stages of dealing with issues surrounding Aboriginal children in Prince Edward Island. Ms. Chisolm believes that PEI is about 20 years behind the rest of the Canada. PEI has a population of about 115, 000 people, which include many different cultural organizations. PEI faces the same challenges as those suffered by other Aboriginal people in Canada, such as poverty, health, homelessness, and unemployment.

## VI. BANQUET

Many conference participants took the opportunity to attend a dinner at the University of British Columbia, with catering provided by the Musqueam Food Service Training Program. Entertainment was provided by Billy Joe Green.

Dinner Speakers were Wayne Helgason, President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and Mary Richard, Executive Director, Thunderbird House, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Mr. Helgason gave a unique interpretation of Federal-Aboriginal relations through the eyes of the Honourable Jean Chretien. He then asked a youth worker from Winnipeg to demonstrate, with youth from the audience, a trust-building activity.

Mary Richard demonstrated her irrepressible sense of humour by telling stories from her 25 years of work as a leader and community activist. She spoke of her current projects at Thunderbird House, and of the many changes she has seen take place in her community over the years.

***“I don't think we realize the impact we have,” she said. “We are influencing the world...We are influencing how things are being discussed. If we go into the non-Aboriginal community and bring a clear message, a lot of non-Aboriginal people will support us.”***

“I don’t think we realize the impact we have,” she said. “We are influencing the world...We are influencing how things are being discussed. If we go into the non-Aboriginal community and bring a clear message, a lot of non-Aboriginal people will support us.” Finally, Mrs. Richard spoke about the conference, and her high hopes for the future. “I feel so good being here and getting together again, because I know we are on the right track.”

## **VII. SUMMARY OF DAY THREE DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

### ***A. Opening Remarks: Dwight Dorey, national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)***

Mr. Dorey began by discussing how urban Aboriginal people have been largely ignored by government. He said urban Aboriginal people are at the centre of the conflict between themselves, federal and provincial jurisdiction, and traditional values versus assimilation. As a result, Mr. Dorey said urban Aboriginal governance models must involve co-existence. “We need to deal with the federal, provincial and municipal governments. New relationships must be forged to move forward.”

Mr. Dorey then went on to discuss various projects the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is now involved with, including campaigning for a new Aboriginal Peoples Act and a new ministry, and working with the federal government to put structures in place for future change. “We know this is not about comprehensive reform, or inherent rights. But we view it as positive because our federal and provincial members have been invited to participate from the beginning.”

Mr. Dorey then went on to emphasize the importance of working together, and pursuing cooperation at all levels of government. “It’s not enough to imagine a just and better future, we must have action,” he said. “[Urban people] are the fastest growing population of Aboriginal people, and we will have our place.”

### ***B. Plenary Session: “Federal/Provincial Co-operation on Urban Aboriginal Issues”***

Plenary sessions presenters were Fred Caron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat of the Privy Council Office of the Government of Canada, and Prad Khare, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services for the Government of British Columbia.

Mr. Caron began by discussing the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, which was created in 1998. The Strategy has five elements:

1. All federal government departments creating new programs must look at whether urban Aboriginal people are clients, and deal with the implications & specific needs.



2. Improving access to services and raising awareness.
3. Enhanced policy research.
4. Partnerships. Government must find better ways to work with Aboriginal and provincial partners. They must determine what's working and how to make it work better.
5. Creating greater public awareness of the issues.

Mr. Caron then spoke about how the government is attempting to place the emphasis for this work on the local level, and improve communication between different levels of government and government departments. "The efforts we've made are modest, but we hope they will move us forward," he said.

Mr. Khare spoke about improving services for urban Aboriginal people, including:

1. The Urban Aboriginal Directorate, which administers the First Citizen's Fund
2. Informal dialogues with the federal government to find common areas for coordinated and seamless service delivery.
3. Engaging the provincial ministry and Aboriginal service providers to come to the table and find integrated service delivery solutions.
4. Preparing a strategy with the federal government to bring more federal programs to urban Aboriginal people.

Mr. Khare also emphasized his government's work related to employment and training services, especially for Aboriginal youth, and affirmed the importance of partnerships across governments, communities and the private sector. "We are on the right track, together we will make a difference, but it will take a long time," he said.

Several questions were posed to the panel regarding clarification around the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, and the distribution of the First Citizen's Fund. Panelists were also quizzed on their government's programs for Aboriginal women, and the shortfalls of the 1996 census related to urban Aboriginal people.

At this time, questions were also put to opening speaker, Dwight Dorey, including the problem of having so many different organizations representing one group of people, and CAP's participation in the First Nations Governance Act. All speakers were asked to explain their approach to Aboriginal youth issues and their plans for youth consultation in program development.

### ***C. Small Group Work and Report Back on Possible Next Steps***

To make progress on the third objective of the conference – stimulating the development of action plans among participants – the conference organizers developed an exercise that took place on the last morning of the event. Conference participants were divided into small groups and asked to identify what they felt were the three most important next steps (to follow from the conference). Following small group discussions each group reported their findings, which were compiled into one list. All conference participants then had an opportunity, through a "red dot" exercise, to vote for their three top choices.

From this exercise, six key themes arose.

- 1. There should be another conference on Aboriginal governance in urban settings within the next 1½ years. The conference should have a social justice theme. Provincial meetings should be held prior to a national conference, and a national youth forum should also be organized. A number of locations were considered, with Edmonton receiving the most support. In all, the various aspects of a follow-up conference received 59 votes.**
- 2. Money spent on consultants' salaries should instead be spent on elders and leadership salaries. This theme received 21 votes.**
- 3. A web site should be developed to share information, resources and best practices, and encourage communication between communities. This idea received 20 votes.**
- 4. A one person, one vote system for electing national leaders is needed to ensure better representation. This idea received 16 votes.**
- 5. More Aboriginal councils in urban settings should be organized. Urban Aboriginal councils should then form a national federation so that the voice of urban Aboriginal peoples is heard. This theme received 15 votes.**
- 6. Finally, in terms of urban Aboriginal issues that need to be addressed, poverty was considered the most important. The second key issue was economic development infrastructure.**

For a complete list of the results of the “red dot” activity, please see Annex A.

#### ***D. Luncheon Speaker – Herb George, Vice-Chief of the Assembly of First Nations***

Mr. George began by discussing the proposed changes to the Indian Act. He stated the Indian Act was designed to “1) take our land, 2) suppress us in the past, 3) continue to suppress us.” He said he sees the current process as an opportunity for Aboriginal people to take the Indian Act, turn it around and make it work.

He also emphasized the importance of working together, and working towards a national process for governance. “Unity doesn’t mean we all agree on everything,” he said. “It means we work together to identify common issues and find solutions to these, and put aside the issues that divide us.”

***“Unity doesn’t mean we all agree on everything,” he said. “It means we work together to identify common issues and find solutions to these, and put aside the issues that divide us.”***

Finally, Mr. George talked about working for a better future for the next generation, and of “putting a new memory in the minds of our children.” He ended by emphasizing the importance of accepting responsibility and working together to create change. “There’s a time to talk and a time to get down to do it, and that time is now. This is not a time for rhetoric, it’s a time for action. A time to take responsibility to address the issues for ourselves.”

Mr. George then fielded several questions around the AFN, land claims, and the Corbiere decision. Mr. George said he had done a lot of work on Corbiere and felt that while it was an important step for urban Aboriginal people, it didn’t mean anything in terms of belonging to a particular culture or community. “When you are born into our nation, you are part of that nation,” he said. “We don’t need to look at someone else to tell us who our members are.”

## **VIII. CONFERENCE CLOSING**

Scott Clark, president of the United Native Nations closed the conference by thanking Dwight Dorey for his attendance, and recognizing the hard work of the all those at the United Native Nations, Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and the Institute On Governance who worked together to plan, organize and deliver the conference.

***“It’s up to each of us to go back to our communities and say we are going to mobilize and put this into practice.”***

Mr. Clark spoke of the need for an action plan. “We need to put the flag out there and rally behind it,” he said. “It’s up to each of us to go back to our communities and say we are going to mobilize and put this into practice.” He also emphasized the many positive aspects the urban Aboriginal community has that will help move them forward, including enthusiastic youth, experienced and involved elders, and many dedicated volunteers, especially women, who work within the community to deliver services and create change.

Mr. Clark then presented gifts to the conference co-chairs. He told Jason Wilson that while youth are often called the leaders of tomorrow, he was certainly a “leader for today.” He spoke of Marge White as a great mentor, and the person you go to when you need to know how to move forward in a respectful and traditional way.

Elder Ken Harris closed the conference with a prayer.

## Annex A – Results of Small Group Discussions

The results of the small group discussions and “red dot” activity, in order of importance (number of votes appears in brackets), are:

- Youth want to replace consultant salaries with elders and leadership salaries. We want our elders to lead us. (21)
- Develop a web site for urban Aboriginal governance to share information, resources, best practices and for communication among communities. Terry, a conference participant, offered to take this on, and will do it with no government funding. (20)
- Theme for next conference should be: social justice for urban Aboriginal people. Ensure there are discussion papers in advance looking at youth, women and people with disabilities. Sub-theme would be on social capital. (19)
- Should be an annual conference (next one in Toronto in 18 months). Provincial conferences should occur prior to national conference, and work on women and anti-poverty issues. (18)
- Develop political institutions so that all people have universal suffrage to elect their leaders. We need one voice – without it no one is keeping an eye on our rights. (16)
- Form more urban Aboriginal councils to make a national federation to strengthen the voice of the urban community. (15)
- Have a national youth governance forum. Get youth together prior to the conference to make sure more youth and more youth organizations participate. The leaders would also participate to provide mentoring and enhance the capacity of youth to participate. (13)
- Develop and implement urban Aboriginal economic development infrastructure that addresses organization and individual capacity to build wealth. (10)
- The need to work together to eradicate poverty by building capacity within the communities, while at the same time moving towards governance by developing a transition process to build capacity for service delivery and self-government (10).
- Should be an annual national conference. Next one should be in Edmonton 2003. Second choice is Halifax in 2004. (9)
- Provide feedback and develop a discussion paper inclusive and equal for elders, leaders and youth, therefore enhancing the participation and integration of the governance process. (8)
- Reduce poverty by lobbying for an increased national child benefit and ending claw-backs to welfare; reminding federal government they had a priority to eliminate child poverty and they missed it; and finding a way to share best practices about reducing poverty. (8)

- Create a national unity strategy among our organizations, listening to youth and led by youth and national and community leaders. (8)
- Cities should be engaged in a dialogue on urban Aboriginal issues. (6)
- Have a national conference in 2004 in Yellowknife to include northern issues. Theme should be: transitioning from poverty to governance. (6)
- Developing safe places and forums for Aboriginal youth and children to reduce the apprehension (stealing) and adoption rights and taking care of our children = self-determination (5)
- To clarify the concept of self-determination — the right of a people to establish their own forms of governance and politics without outside interference or coercion. (4)
- Have a conference with the theme: integrating our visions (3)
- Have another conference two years in eastern Canada. The theme should be self-determination. Ideally, this would be done with no government money. (2)
- Develop a traditional MOU among national organizations to work together with communities to bring forward priority issues. (Develop a national infrastructure.) (1)