

Getting from the Roundtable to Results

Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Process
April 2004 - March 2005
SUMMARY REPORT



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"I attended the April 19, 2004 Canada Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable and the six sectoral sessions and I felt good watching our First Nations people participating in the roundtable process. They are intelligent, dedicated, committed and hopeful for a better future for our people and for all Canadians. I've seen it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears and what struck me the most was that First Nations people have the ability and the will to take care of ourselves."

Elmer Courchene, AFN Elder
Sakgeeng First Nation, Manitoba

(AFN Photo - 2004)



OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL CHIEF

BUREAU DU CHEF NATIONAL

Assembly of First Nations

Assemblée des Premières Nations



March 10, 2005

RE: Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Process

The Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable process wrapped up with its final follow-up session on January 26, 2005. Initiated April 19, 2004, this process has allowed First Nations to meet with senior government officials – including Prime Minister Paul Martin – to raise issues of fundamental importance to our peoples and communities.

The format of these meetings included an initial roundtable hosted by the Prime Minister last April, followed by six sectoral sessions during the Fall/Winter. Given the uniqueness of this opportunity, the AFN has worked particularly hard to coordinate the involvement of First Nation peoples from across Canada. We brought forward our best ideas based on as much input as possible. We took up the Prime Minister's challenge, we came to the table, and we laid out our plan. AFN delivered a clear and united message to the government.

The Prime Minister has called for 'transformative' change. We have spoken of this kind of change for decades. The Prime Minister committed to work collaboratively with us on all new policies affecting our people and to secure a 'full seat at the table' for Aboriginal leaders. We knew this was long overdue. So we came to the table because we knew that these were the commitments that we had been seeking for a long, long time.

We came to the table in good faith, and now we expect the Prime Minister to act in good faith. We expect the Prime Minister to act on his commitments. We expect the Prime Minister to follow through on his promises to address the urgent need in our communities: to address the gap between life chances for our youth versus other Canadians; to address the backlog in housing on our reserves; to address key health determinants that make our life expectancy 5-10 years shorter than that of other Canadians.

We have waited a long time for the government to act, and the time to act is right now. We look forward to getting results from this Prime Minister.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Fontaine'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Phil Fontaine
National Chief

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Getting from the Roundtable to Results

Part I



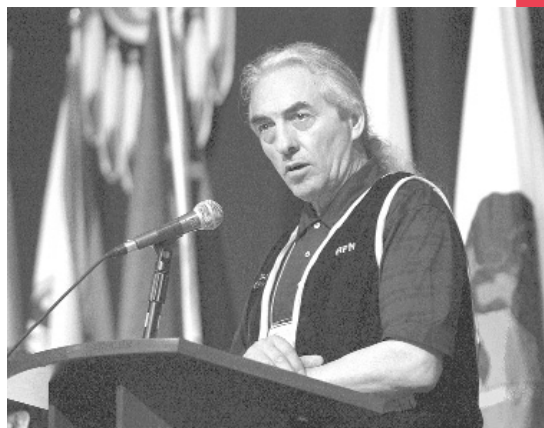
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CANADA-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE PROCESS

January 26, 2005 marked the close of the final sectoral follow-up session to the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable. The Roundtable, convened by Prime Minister Paul Martin on April 19, 2004, was an opportunity for the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations to engage directly on a new agenda and a new relationship with the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. It was followed-up by six "sectoral sessions" held between November 2004 and January 2005 to deal with priority issues that emerged at the Roundtable: Health, Lifelong Learning, Housing, Economic Opportunities, Negotiations and Accountability.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine was the first Aboriginal leader to speak at the Roundtable in April, and following the close of the last sectoral session he expressed his expectations at this critical point:



"The AFN has advanced concrete, tangible recommendations for change to ensure that this historic opportunity leads to a new era of change and progress. We are now at the crossroads. We can embark on a period of unprecedented progress, prosperity and partnership, or we can continue to prop-up a broken system. The Prime Minister made bold commitments to a new relationship and 'transformative change' – we have provided the vision, the plan and the path forward. All we need now is the political will to act on these innovative ideas."



National Chief Phil Fontaine

The Roundtable process will lead to a joint Cabinet retreat between the Federal Government and Aboriginal leaders in the Spring of 2005, and will culminate in a full First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues proposed for the Fall of 2005.

The recommendations put forward by First Nations are based on the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. The overall goal is to implement First Nation governments by securing sustainable funding based on real costs and promoting integration of services and programs under First Nation control. This would maximize the return on investment, help to develop research and data focused on accountability to First Nation citizens, and address critical needs and gaps on an urgent basis.



Making progress for First Nations and Canada requires sustainable funding that ends the current cap on increases. This will enable First Nations to build their economies and governments and, ultimately, to contribute back to the national economy. Currently there is a 2 percent cap on increases to First Nations core funding that has been in place since 1996. The cap does not keep pace with inflation or population growth – or need – and the result is diminishing resources. First Nation governments are forced to do more with less, and the detrimental effects are measurable. A recent study by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs indicates that the gap in quality of life between Canadians and First Nations citizens is not closing, and that it stopped closing in 1996. As the National Chief has said, “Creating transformative change is impossible when you are managing poverty”.

The AFN is committed to working with the Prime Minister and other partners including the Provinces and Territories to give life to a shared vision of stronger First Nations and a stronger Canada. This requires real commitment from all of us. The AFN has brought forward positive and constructive ideas, and now we need to see a commitment to implementing this vision so that it becomes a reality in our lifetime.

SUMMARY OF AFN'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FROM THE SIX CANADA-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE SECTORAL SESSIONS

1. At the **Health** session, First Nations called for a clear commitment to facilitate sustainable, accountable and culturally sensitive First Nation health systems. Specific recommendations included the implementation of commitments made at the 2004 First Ministers Meeting on Health with Aboriginal leaders with a focus on:

- critical upstream investments in key areas such as diabetes; and
- a reasonable rate of growth based on real cost drivers to ensure the sustainability of all First Nation health programming.

In addition, AFN spoke of the need for a First Nations public health infrastructure to promote prevention and supportive programming as an integral aspect of transforming the health outcomes of First Nation peoples.

2. In **Lifelong Learning** (education, employment, training), First Nations participants carried the message that First Nation control of universal, holistic and sustainable First Nation learning systems is required. Specific targeted outcomes are expected in several areas including:

- ensuring comparability with the general population in all aspects of K-12 education for First Nation students;
- developing First Nation education authorities to provide critical supportive infrastructure; and
- addressing gaps and needs as they relate to early childhood education and child welfare.


AFN also recommended a thorough review of federal and provincial skills training programming to ensure that the young First Nations population is equipped to take its rightful place in the Canadian economy.

3. In **Housing**, the AFN advocated for:

- urgent action to eliminate the backlog of housing and shelter needs confronting First Nation peoples;
- investment for remediation and renovation addressing contaminants including mold;
- the longer term goal of implementing First Nation control over housing through new entities that will govern, maintain and manage First Nation housing systems in a sustainable, secure manner.

4. At the **Economic Opportunities** session, the AFN advocated for:

- the need to position First Nations as integral players in the Canadian economy through recognizing First Nations' rightful place in resource development, environmental stewardship, job training and business development.



Initial concrete action in this regard could include updating Canada's Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy to ensure that it meets the economic interests and requirements of First Nations.

5. In the **Negotiations** session, National Chief Fontaine stated he was particularly pleased with the dialogue that converged with focused recommendations, including the Minister of Indian Affairs' public instructions to his departmental negotiators to be flexible and creative in their discussions with First Nations. The AFN stated that:
 - a new approach is required to First Nation negotiations, one that reflects court rulings from over the last decade and is inclusive of self-government, land claims and treaty implementation;
 - reconciliation must become the common goal of negotiations, which can be achieved through a new, multi-dimensional, multi-jurisdictional framework.
6. At the **Accountability** session, First Nations challenged the government to:
 - commit to reciprocal accountability from the Federal Government to First Nations - not simply more reporting by First Nations to the Federal Government - based on the principles of a government-to-government relationship;
 - a broad First Nations accountability framework that would provide meaningful assessments and track real progress in addressing the shameful conditions facing First Nations communities; and
 - developing supportive institutions such as a First Nations Auditor-General.



National Chief Phil Fontaine and Prime Minister Paul Martin, Canada Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, April 2004

(INAC Photo)

"Let's fix the current system and let us also be bold enough to imagine a new and better system."

National Chief Phil Fontaine
Opening Speech at the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples
Roundtable
April 19, 2004

"[W]e will ensure a full seat at the table – as we have ensured today – to Aboriginal communities and leaders. No longer will we in Ottawa develop policies first and discuss them with you later. This principle of collaboration will be the cornerstone of our new partnership."

Prime Minister Paul Martin
Opening Speech at the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples
Roundtable
April 19, 2004

Introduction


This document attempts to synthesize the involvement of First Nations in the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable (CAPR) process. To do this, it brings together all of the key materials that went into preparing for this process and summarizes what has come out of this process so far. In this respect, it reiterates what First Nation leaders and representatives have been saying for decades: that no real progress is possible without the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. This document concludes our dialogue with the Federal Government on 'process', setting the stage for a new emphasis on meeting commitments.

The shift from process to commitment will necessarily have to take place within the context of a joint Cabinet Retreat planned for the Spring 2005, which will be followed by a First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in the Fall 2005. This document can be used as a reference tool, depending upon the specific interests of your Nation, but it also constitutes a comprehensive statement by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) about what actions need to take place to address the myriad of issues and problems facing First Nation peoples and communities in the 21st century.

Over the past year, the AFN has engaged in an intense effort aimed at advocating for the recognition and implementation of the right to self-determination by securing participation in key Federal and Provincial decision-making processes. This effort culminated in the inception of the CAPR process convened by Prime Minister Paul Martin on April 19, 2004. The CAPR process has been an opportunity for the AFN and other Aboriginal organizations to engage the Federal Government in the development of a new policy partnership.

At the initial CAPR meeting, National Chief Phil Fontaine and Regional Chiefs from across Canada expressed their views on the centrality of Aboriginal and Treaty rights and the corresponding responsibilities of the Federal Government. In turn, Prime Minister Martin committed himself to working collaboratively on the development of all new policies affecting Aboriginal peoples, and said he would secure a 'full seat at the table' for Aboriginal communities and leaders. These commitments were underscored by a series of 'sectoral' follow-up sessions that took place during the Fall/Winter 2004-05. Each follow-up session focused on one of six key policy sectors, namely, health, lifelong learning, housing, economic opportunities, negotiations, and accountability respectively.

The AFN has worked to coordinate the involvement of First Nation peoples across Canada in the CAPR process. To ensure that its positions are clear, a policy framework based on AFN resolutions and First Nation direction was established to guide all engagement in this process. The policy framework, confirmed by the National Executive, is based on the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights and includes:

- 
1. Contributing to the implementation of First Nation governments;
 2. Securing sustainable funding based on real costs;
 3. Promoting the integration of services and programming under First Nation control;
 4. Building First Nation capacity and developing research and data focused on accountability to First Nations; and
 5. Addressing critical needs and gaps on an urgent basis.

In addition, the AFN continues to make efforts to ensure that the cross-cutting perspectives of Youth, Women, and Urban First Nation peoples are included in all aspects of policy development.

Prior to each of the sectoral follow-up sessions, the AFN issued a background paper that was distributed widely on its website and elsewhere. As well, the AFN hosted a First Nation caucus meeting in advance of each sectoral session to provide information and support for First Nation delegates. Following each session, the AFN issued an outcome statement to confirm the messages of First Nation participants. The outcomes from the first three sessions were confirmed at the December 2004 Special Chiefs Assembly, and the final three outcome statements will be presented for confirmation at the Special Chiefs Assembly planned for March 29-31, 2005. Finally, the AFN has also released a Bulletin documenting comments made by the National Chief about this process, and summarizing the AFN's recommendations and expectations. These initiatives have helped to position the AFN to take a lead in defining a new relationship with the Federal Government.

The AFN continues to bring focus to the need for the Federal Government to recognize First Nation jurisdiction and to fulfill its obligations based on Aboriginal and Treaty rights. As already noted, the Federal Government, responding to AFN advocacy, has committed to holding a joint Cabinet Retreat with Aboriginal leaders in the Spring 2005, and both Federal and Provincial leaders have committed to a First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in the Fall 2005. First Nations have pressed for such forums for almost a decade.

Our success in securing these forums is only a partial victory however, as the AFN is now pressing aggressively to ensure that each of these meetings leads to specific outcomes that will see First Nation governments engaged in all key federal / provincial / territorial processes affecting First Nations interests in the future. This document brings together all of this information in an effort to provide a foundation for a broad action plan that can enable the AFN to take advantage of the unique opportunities over the next 12-16 months.

CANADA ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE: BACKGROUND

What is it?

The Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable brought together leaders from the First Nations (Assembly of First Nations), Inuit (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami-ITK), and Métis (Métis National Council -MNC) to meet with the most senior leaders and officials of the Government of Canada. In addition, the Government of Canada also included the Congress of Aboriginal People (CAP) and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). The first meeting was held in April 2004. We were able to talk with the Prime Minister and key government officials about what is most important to us, and our vision of building strong First Nations citizens, communities, and governments.

A Renewed Relationship

The April 2004 meeting was the **start** of a 'renewed relationship' with Canada. It was an important event for First Nations. During the meeting, the Prime Minister made key commitments to Aboriginal Peoples:

To secure "a full seat at the table for Aboriginal Peoples"

Collaboration and partnership in all future policy making.

To this end, it was agreed that a series of meetings would be held during the fall and winter on key policy issues. The plan was to come up with firm recommendations in each of these areas. These would be taken to a joint Policy Retreat of the Cabinet Committee and Aboriginal leaders in the Spring of 2005.

The Process

AFN engaged in the CAPR process as a way to secure the commitments that the Prime Minister made on April 19, 2004.

Timelines:



Getting from the Roundtable to Results

Part II



CANADA – ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE SECTORAL SESSIONS

Sectoral Discussion Topic	Date / Location	Key Dept / Ministers
Health	November 3-4, 2004 Ottawa, ON	LEAD: Health Canada MOS Public Health MOS Children & Youth Federal Interlocutor for Métis & Non Status Indians Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Life Long Learning (ECD & K-12) Life Long Learning (PSE & Skills Dev.)	November 13-14, 2004 Winnipeg, MB November 18-19, 2004 Ottawa, ON	LEAD: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada MOS Children & Youth Federal Interlocutor for Métis & Non Status Indians Department of Social Development Health Canada Human Resources & Skills Development
Housing	November 24-25, 2004 Ottawa, ON	LEAD: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp. Minister Labour & Homelessness Interlocutor Métis, Non Status Indians Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Economic Opportunities	December 13-14, 2004 Ottawa, ON	LEAD: Industry Canada MOS Children & Youth Federal Interlocutor for Métis & Non Status Indians MOS Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario Natural Resources Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Western Economic Diversification Fisheries and Oceans Human Resources & Skills Development
Negotiations Calgary, AB	January 12-13, 2005	LEAD: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Federal Interlocutor for Métis & Non Status Indians Justice Canada
Accountability	January 25-26, 2005 Ottawa, ON	LEAD: Treasury Board Federal Interlocutor Métis and Non Status Indians Finance Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Industry Canada

Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
Sectoral Session

Health





Health



"We believe that our health is connected to the health of Mother Earth. Today she is suffering, and we are suffering, too, with cancer and with diseases that were unheard of in the past." - Elder Bill Commanda, Quebec

(Fred Cattroll Photo)



Health

SUMMARY of OUTCOMES

The Sectoral Session on Health was held on November 4-5, 2004, in Ottawa, hosted by the Minister of Health, Ujjal Dosanjh. He suggested that this session would help to set guidelines for the progress that the government wants to make in Aboriginal health, narrowing the gap in 'opportunity' and 'outcomes' between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canadian society.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) hosted a National Policy Summit on Developing and Implementing a First Nations Health Action Plan the week prior (October 28-29) in Winnipeg. The Summit proceedings were tabled at the Health Sectoral Session. A First Nations Caucus of Sectoral Session participants was organized by the AFN so that outcomes of the Summit discussion could be examined and the overall Session process reviewed. The Session deliberations were recorded by the AFN and these were made available to all Summit participants. This document provides a summary of questions and outcomes discussed at the Policy Summit and Sectoral Session, along with a list of recommendations and the identification of next steps.

Key Questions

1. How will we address the issues of jurisdiction and control that are impacting on the delivery of, and access to, health services?
2. What are the key issues and adaptive approaches that would contribute to improved levels of access to, and integration of health programming and services?
3. What and how does capacity and sustainability need to be built? How do we know that we have achieved success?

Recommendations

1. Jurisdiction

- Effective, efficient, sustainable, responsive, culturally sensitive and accountable to First Nations governance structure under which a health system would operate;
- Based on Treaties (where applicable), Inherent Rights, and Nationhood.

Short-Term

- Being inclusive of First Nations in other governments' planning;
- Meaningful engagement of First Nations communities;

- Establish structures of First Nations jurisdiction (roles and responsibilities, political and technical, policies, funding);
- Create a health system framework (holistic) that focuses on community driven models based on health needs;
- Revisit existing government structures to foster integration where appropriate;
- Establishment of a knowledge base;
- Investments in infrastructure;
- Removal of cap on postsecondary funding.

Medium-Term

- Development of protocols with federal/provincial government that respect First Nations governance;
- Legislated First Nations authorities with appropriate funding;
- Development of supportive services in the area of public health.

Long-Term

- Government to Government relationship;
- Removal of jurisdictional barriers to health services through fully reciprocal agreements across governments. Specific details of such agreements to be negotiated at the local/regional/provincial level as deemed appropriate to meet the needs of communities involved;
- Definition of First Nations 'communities' that enables legal arrangements with municipalities, etc., and the ability to raise funds;
- Parallel health systems – like school boards – where First Nations peoples can control mechanism and standard of services;
- University recruitment and education process that encourages health professionals to practice in their communities;
- Incorporation of First Nations cultural education into medical school programming;
- Funding for proper training and accreditation for para-professionals and traditional healers;
- Comprehensive information systems – including smart cards – under First Nations control;
- Involvement of Youth in all planning and decision-making.

2. Access and Integration

- Multi-disciplinary team of professionals and community members;
- Full dialogue and participation with First Nations community members;
- Agreement at the highest levels of existing jurisdictions about the protection of Inherent and Treaty rights to health;
- Promotion of 'Cultural Safety' (developed by Maori nurses) in health systems;

- First Nations representatives at the institutional, community and provincial levels.

Short-Term

- Develop common definition, vision and principles;
- Secure community, leadership and service delivery buy-in;
- Establishment of interagency councils;
- Change federal funding to ensure dollars target all First Nations through one funding source;
- Development of service delivery protocols that include services for on and off reserve First Nations citizens;
- Ensure governments are accountable for the dollars they receive on the behalf of First Nations;
- Development and establishment of First Nations owned and controlled information management systems;
- First Nations access to all data that is collected on their behalf.

Medium-Term

- Flexible development of community strategic plans that are issue driven;
- Progress in the development of First Nations policy/legislation;
- Development of First Nations professional institutions to increase First Nations professional capacity with a culturally relevant curriculum to ensure recruitment, graduation, and retention at the community level.

Long-Term

- Framework/Business Plan to promote lifelong learning to ensure development of culturally competent educators and health care providers (future/current);
- Access to health programs/curriculum/professions for Youth;
- Inclusion of Elders/Traditional Healers to ensure a complementary balance of western scientific approaches and traditional knowledge;
- Adequate resource allocation/buy-in.

3. Building Capacity and Sustainability

- Jobs in First Nations communities after graduation;
- Increase proportionally the number of First Nations health professionals delivering services to First Nations communities;
- Balance of First Nations and medical sciences knowledge systems;
- Resources to support community based partnerships with educational institutes;
- Development of funding models to meet human resource planning needs;

- Allocation of resources based on need;
- Adequate infrastructure to employ workers on a per capita basis with qualified staff to deliver the best possible quality services (with state of the art facilities).
- Coordinated funding arrangements between different levels of government for the effective allocation and use of resources across the health system;
- Independent and integrated health system that reflects the community's health needs and priorities;
- Community owned and managed by trained First Nations professionals, funded by government, and accountable to the people first;
- Funding projections based on population growth with escalator clauses and appropriate mechanisms to allow for flexibility to target priority health concerns;
- Negotiations of access programs for First Nations students;
- Enhancement of "pre" programs and development of "laddering" programs;
- Raising the level of social consciousness at existing universities;
- Inclusive, universal, accessible.

Next Steps

1. Based on Resolution 102/2004, the AFN is advocating for a First Nation rights-based Blueprint development process at the national and regional levels. The Blueprint will clarify roles and responsibilities while strengthening First Nation governments' role in health service delivery. Key steps in the process are:
 - a. First Nation provincial, territorial and treaty organizations receive resources to develop contributions for exercising a lead role in discussions with federal / provincial / territorial governments (will send proposals on process and contributions to AFN);
 - b. National First Nations Health Conference in May 2005 to showcase regional Blueprints;
 - c. National roll-up of regional Blueprints presented at July 2005 Annual General Assembly for Chiefs-in-Assembly approval;
 - d. Bi-monthly teleconferences with Chiefs Committee on Health to monitor progress and advise the National Chief on next steps.
2. Possible priority agenda items that could be reflected in the national First Nations Blueprint (depending on regional contributions) are:
 - a. Integration and adaptation of services (First Nation Health Authorities, On-reserve & Urban, Health Human Resources);
 - b. Equitable access to Canadian health care improvements (Escalator, Infrastructure, Primary & Continuing Care); and,
 - c. Upstream investments (Public health, women's health, mental health).

Background Paper on Health

Vision:

The overall goal of the First Nations Health Action Plan is a First Nations controlled and sustainable health system that adopts a holistic, culturally appropriate approach.

First Nations health authorities, with options for integrated funding and service delivery approaches, will be essential to addressing systemic inequities in health status and access to quality care, at individual, community and Nation levels.

In order to advance the vision of First Nations, a Federal/Provincial/Territorial/First Nations Blueprint on First Nations Health should be developed with the meaningful engagement of First Nations leadership at a national and regional level.

Issue Statement

- The Prime Minister himself recently acknowledged the “shameful conditions” of First Nations peoples. First Nations peoples, when compared with the Canadian public, face much higher rates of chronic and communicable diseases, and are exposed to greater health risks because of poor housing, contaminated water and limited access to healthy foods and employment opportunities.
- First Nations perceive the state of their personal health as poorer than other Canadians.
- Furthermore, First Nations face issues common amongst the Canadian public, such as waiting times and lack of coordination among health providers, services and patient information.
- The most recent United Nations Human Development Report – that increased Canada’s ranking from 8th to 4th in the world — suggests that increasing public spending and targeting funds to populations most in need, by itself, are not enough. The underlying economic and social framework that perpetuates historical and social injustices should be changed. Research, such as that conducted by Chandler and Lalonde and the Harvard Project, has established the link between cultural continuity and self-determination, and better health and health determinant outcomes.
- The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Romanow Report recognized First Nations jurisdiction over the health of First Nations Peoples pursuant to an inherent right to self-government, as well as the need and potential for new integration and partnership models to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health systems. First Nations are adamant that any approach to coordinating services must be done through First Nations, self-governing authorities with targeted and consolidated funding. This approach is a key element of transformative change in these two studies.

- During the April 19th Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, the Prime Minister proposed a new relationship built on a principle of collaboration and aimed at transformative change.
- During the recent First Ministers Special Meeting on Aboriginal Health, National Chief Phil Fontaine presented a First Nations Health Action Plan, based on strategic directions as vetted by the Chiefs Committee on Health and the National First Nations Health Technicians Network. The Health Action Plan has two pillars:
 - **Sustainability** requires funding matched to population growth, health needs and real cost drivers, as well effective measurements to monitor and track spending and results.
 - **Integration** is an essential principle which could empower First Nations to better coordinate health services and programs across jurisdictions and create a new holistic framework of First Nations health system renewal.
- The First Nations Health Action Plan has six key Elements:
 - 1. Sustainable Financial Base**
 - 2. Integrated Primary and Continuing Care**
 - 3. Health Human Resources**
 - 4. Public Health Infrastructure**
 - 5. Healing and Wellness**
 - 6. Information and Research Capacity**
- The federal government and First Ministers responded to key elements of the First Nations Health Action Plan by making a series of commitments to improving the health and well-being of First Nations, including: instructing the Ministers of Health to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal leaders, a blueprint within one year for achieving marked improvements, holding a First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Issues, commitment to \$700 million in new investments:
 - An Aboriginal Health Transition Fund;
 - Aboriginal Health Human Resources;
 - Upstream Investments in diabetes, maternal and child health, Aboriginal Head Start on-reserve and suicide prevention
- On October 28-29, 2004, the AFN is hosting a National Policy Summit on Developing and Implementing a First Nations Health Action Plan. The intent of the Summit is to seek community and regional First Nations input towards a collective Action Plan for improving health and well-being. The National Summit is intended as a first step that will inform the November 4-5 Health Sectoral Session. The Summit is structured to encourage open dialogue on four themes:
 1. Health Systems Based on Need: Elements Leading to Sustainability
 2. Adopting a Holistic Approach: How Population Health Contributes to This Priority

3. Human Resources Development Strategies for Health
4. First Nations Jurisdiction in Health and Mechanisms for Engaging with Federal, Provincial and Territorial Health Systems

Key Objectives of the Health Sectoral Session:

Strategic:

- Further inform a First Nations Health Action Plan.
- Open participation in establishing strategic directions for First Nations health via an open process to contribute to further dialogue with federal, provincial and territorial governments.
- In the context of the longer term strategic objectives:
 - Validate and/or update on progress in implementing a First Nations Health Action Plan.
 - Bring forward best practices in achieving key elements within the First Nations Health Action Plan.
 - Monitor and improve ongoing engagement strategy with federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Key Questions/Discussion Topics

Generic:

- First Nations have had limited opportunity to participate in decisions with federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions relating to health. As a result, First Ministers Health Accords have generally had minimal impact and benefit to First Nations. New investments barely reach communities and First Nations living off-reserve. Most critically, significant health disparities between First Nations and the Canadian population persist.
- A discussion on the distinct rights of First Nations and how government policy should support those rights must be held. The uniqueness of First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights maintains the need for the creation of innovative and unique approaches to policy development. The distinct positions of First Nations are historic and ongoing, and, therefore, are not amenable to a uniform Aboriginal Policy approach by the federal or provincial governments.
- At present, Health Canada claims policy as the basis for providing services to status First Nations and First Nations reserves. First Nations maintain Treaty and Aboriginal rights to health care as fundamental to this service relationship.
- The Crown-Aboriginal fiduciary relationship, which includes the duty to consult, provides for First Nations taking part in the earliest levels of planning and policy, to the extent that decisions impacts upon the majority of First Nations and their health.

- In exercising their jurisdiction, First Nations are delivering health services, including facilities that also serve non-First Nations residents (Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital, the Nisga'a Valley Health Board and Weeneebayko Health Ahtushkaywin).
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How do we build a legal/policy framework for First Nations integration of administration, funding and delivery of health services?
 - What are the critical elements that need to be part of such an approach?
 - How to we create linkages and protocols that support collaborative planning and service delivery between jurisdictions and health professionals, while respecting the status of First Nations peoples?

Focused:

SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL BASE

- In the last five years, federal investment in First Nations health has been concentrated in new initiatives. Core community primary health programs (nursing, community health representatives, and addictions) have received minimal investment. There has also been much lower growth in targeted funding to First Nations (15%) compared to the increase of 52% in "Aboriginal" programming.
- First Nations have a greater utilization of provincial and territorial hospital and physician services, due to increased morbidity and mortality, poorer access to primary care, and delays in seeking care. Excess hospital costs incurred by provinces for First Nations clients in 2003/04 are estimated at \$383.3 million.
- The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program is facing annual shortfalls ranging from \$30 to \$118 million from 2004-2007. The NIHB Program should be renewed in 2005 with new funding levels based on need (e.g. catastrophic drug coverage) and cost drivers, and a management and delivery structure that fully supports First Nations control and reinvestments savings into First Nations capacity.
- Cost drivers show an annual potential average growth rate of 10-12%. Currently, the majority of community-based programs do not receive any annual growth. Based on NIHB projections, in fact, some program areas are deferred or cut. An escalator clause is required to ensure the longer-term sustainability of First Nations health services and programs.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How do we ensure federal investment in core community primary care services and non-insured health benefits are matched to population growth, health needs and cost drivers?
 - How to we measure health needs for planning purposes, while respecting individual and collective rights of First Nations to information and research?

INTEGRATED PRIMARY AND CONTINUING CARE

- The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples proposed a system of healing centres and lodges under First Nations control to bridge jurisdictions and individual ministries and to pool resources from all sources (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and First Nations), i.e. “block funding”. The Romanow Commission similarly proposed Aboriginal Health Partnerships with key elements:
 - Per capita funding based on number of sign-up residents and consolidated funding from region/province/territory;
 - Operation through a fund-holder model where the partnership is responsible for organizing, purchasing and delivering services;
 - A not-for-profit community governance structure with a board composed of representatives from the funders and other individuals (organizers, users, providers).
- In 2002, the Auditor General found that a First Nation without multi-year funding arrangements may have to submit as many as 200 reports annually.
- Some successful examples of integration in First Nations health are known.
 - Eskasoni First Nation’s integrated primary care has achieved \$250,000 in estimated annual savings in provincial hospital costs.
 - The Nisga’a Valley Health Board provides 24/7 first response treatment. Ontario’s health access centres, funded by the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, were found to highly improve access by 87% of urban and 64% of rural residents.
 - Most recently, an agreement was signed between federal, provincial and the Island Lake governments to establish a provincially funded renal and treatment dialysis unit in the First Nations nursing station.
 - *Many Jurisdictions One System* in northern Alberta is a partnership of four First Nations comprising North Peace Tribal Council, with Capital Health Authority, Northern Lights Health Authority and Alberta/NWT Region of First Nations Inuit Health Branch. Operating for the last three years, it is an excellent example of how to develop cross-jurisdictional integrated services in a systematic way. MJOS has chosen diabetes and mental health as the two focal points around which a balanced approach of integration and development can be pursued.
- Federal investments are required to provide higher levels of continuing care in First Nations communities. Provincial health reforms which have, in some cases, resulted in hospital closures, introduction of early discharge programs and other changes, have placed serious pressures on First Nations communities. Population demographics and health status trends will also raise the critical need for continuing care services.

- A POTENTIAL QUESTION TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - As an interim step, how can we promote partnerships amongst organizations to provide a full continuum of care around common visions and goals?
 - How does the framework for integrated models get developed, a national set of base criteria with regionally developed plans?

HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES

- In a 2002 opinion poll conducted by the National Aboriginal Health Organization, 43% of First Nations respondents said they prefer to visit an Aboriginal health care provider to a non-Aboriginal health care provider.
- Generally, very little data is available on First Nation health human resources and the limited outlook is bleak.
- The number of traditional healers, midwives and Elder advisers is not known.
- RCAP recommended that governments and educational institutions undertake to train 10,000 Aboriginal people in health including professional and managerial roles, from 1996-2006.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How should a strategy for First Nations Health Human Resources be developed? Who are the key players and who should take the lead?
 - How can partnerships be created between First Nations communities and organizations and provincial academic institutions?

PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

- The Naylor Report on SARS and the former F/P/T Advisory Committee on Public Health recognized that the greater public health risks and capacity gaps are in First Nations and Inuit communities. Naylor also recognized that First Nations are not simply “stakeholders” in the Canadian public health infrastructure, but have distinct rights-based interests in developing their own jurisdiction and capacity.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How do we develop a framework on First Nations public health that will lead into a First Nations public health infrastructure interconnected with the Canadian Public Health Agency?
 - How can we ensure that new and existing funding is allocated to the benefit of high-risk First Nations populations, e.g. corrections, women, grassroots service organizations?

HEALING AND WELLNESS

- Renewal of the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation are critical opportunities. Without such initiatives, there will be major gaps in funding for community-based initiatives.

- Despite repeated studies demonstrating the need for a comprehensive First Nations mental health strategy, funding available for mental health supports is sporadic or limited to crises (funded by Non-Insured Health Benefits).
- The May 2004 announcement of doubling federal commitment to \$84.4 million for the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS will not address the higher burden of new infection and newly diagnosed AIDS case amongst First Nations.
- There is a desperate need for a national effort in injury prevention and control amongst First Nations communities. Federal investments are required in: capacity-building, research, data surveillance and communication. The cost to government for inaction should be correlated to savings for immediate and long-term injury control of an injured or disabled person over their lifetime.
- A POTENTIAL QUESTION TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION IS:
 - How can we ensure effective programming targeted to First Nations and focusing on prevention and education, while improving access to integrated provincial/territorial services?

INFORMATION AND RESEARCH CAPACITY

- Pan-Canadian investments in Health Research, Electronic Health Records and Telehealth have generally not reached First Nations, despite federal recognition of the need for an Aboriginal Health Infrastructure.
- In 1999, the Minister's Advisory Council on Health Infrastructure supported the concept of a strategically linked Aboriginal Health Infrastructure. The First Nations Information Governance Committee, mandated by the Chiefs Committee on Health, endorsed a set of recommendations to create a specific First Nations Health Infrastructure in 2003.
- The 2003 First Ministers Accord committed to developing and building data infrastructure for an Aboriginal Health Reporting Framework. This framework will increase demands for data on First Nations health.
- Concern over First Nations ownership over information is a key consideration for e-health, health research and health systems accountability. First Nations capacity to support health information management and research would prove effective in gaining better access to health data and evidence.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How can reciprocal accountability be fostered across F/P/T/First Nations jurisdictions and what would be the benefits accrued by First Nations?
 - What are the important elements of a First Nations Health Reporting Framework that could be elaborated of benefit to First Nations?
 - What is the value added of First Nations' capacity and infrastructure in information, research and technology?



Cross-cutting Issues

Governance

- First Nations possess Inherent, Treaty and Aboriginal Rights defined in section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. First Nations are seeking federal recognition of their Treaty/Inherent Rights to health and of the federal fiduciary obligation to deliver health benefits, programs and services to First Nations.
- Each First Nations requires the flexibility to determine how best to exercise their control over the delivery of health services to their population.

Urban

- Research has shown that many urban First Nations are reluctant to use existing health care services due to unfamiliarity with available services or because discomfort in accessing services without an advocate.
- Serious health problems faced by First Nations peoples in urban areas are exacerbated by the poor socioeconomic conditions in which they live. In addition, there are socio-cultural barriers to health care use among urban First Nations people. Programs such as a targeted First Nations Urban Health Care workers program funded under the *Federal Indian Health Care Act* in the United States, do not exist in Canada.
- Moreover, confusion over governmental responsibility and jurisdiction acts as a barrier to achieving a healthy quality of life for urban First Nations peoples attributed to universal access barriers, such as: intergovernmental disputes, federal and provincial offloading, lack of program co-ordination, the exclusion of municipal governments and urban First Nations groups from discussions and negotiations on policy and jurisdictional issues.

Women

- A critical part of the First Nations Health Action Plan is service and sensitivity to the needs of First Nations women's health and well-being.
- Research has demonstrated that First Nations women are among the poorest irrespective of where they reside and that they are targets of discrimination, not only by the broader society but also by their own communities, that the policies and laws of the Government of Canada have actively oppressed First Nations women, diminished their traditional roles and responsibilities, and compromised the respect for First Nations women's health and well-being.
- The 2003 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) cited serious concerns on the situation of Aboriginal women in Canada and the principle responsibility of the federal government in implementing the Convention.
- Because many First Nations women cannot access on-reserve housing, as well as their experiences of discrimination on-reserve, violence and disempowerment, women outnumber First Nations men in urban centres.

Issues surrounding matrimonial real property rights on reserve, violence and discrimination result in increased urbanization, community breakdown and ultimately serious health and safety issues not only for women but also for the entire community.

- First Nations women, who are often the primary caregivers in First Nations households, require healthy and nurturing environments. First Nations women and children are often at increased risk from infectious diseases and other health concerns.
- Legislative variability, access, recruitment and education, scope of practice and peer support are health human resource issues specifically identified by First Nations midwives that need to be further examined and addressed.

Housing

- First Nations possess a Treaty and Aboriginal Right to shelter. The Government of Canada needs to acknowledge, recognize and honour this right and Canada's fiduciary and legal responsibility derived from this Treaty Right.
- Affordable, appropriate, functioning infrastructure systems (i.e. Water treatment, roads to hospitals, e-connectivity of health facilities)
- The United Nations International Covenant recognizes the links between environment, health and infrastructure. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) released a general comment on the human right to water in December 2002. UNESCO extends their definition of the right to water to include adequate housing. (*art. 12, para. 1*)

Economic Development and Human Resources Development

- See health human resources section.

Language and Culture

- Cultural knowledge that can be utilized to improve First Nations health (traditional medicines, healing ceremonies and practices, teachings) encoded in language.

Environment

Increased levels of contaminants in the environment pose potential human health risks, especially to those practicing traditional lifestyles. The impact of the environment on health is recognized in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*. The presence of contaminants in traditional foods (wildlife, vegetation and fish) has brought about a move away from traditional lifestyles (hunting and gathering) and an increase in the consumption of store-bought foods, which can be linked to increased rates of diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Greater First Nations control should extend, not only to health services, but to environmental stewardship to address key health determinants. The connection between environment and health must also be reflected in government policies, programs and operations.



Lifelong Learning

- Dialogue, while limited to date, with First Nations has revealed key components of an integrated strategy for Early Childhood Development:
 - Integral piece to First Nations self-government and self-sufficiency;
 - Reinvestment of savings and targeted funding for First Nations communities (capital, admin);
 - Ease of administrative burden and capacity/training opportunities;
 - First Nations cultures and values reflected in curricula, evaluation and accountability.
- First Nations leadership should be proactively engaged, and not deliberately excluded, in the elaboration of the new National Child Care Program.



Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
Sectoral Session

Life-Long Learning

LIFE-LONG LEARNING





Lifelong Learning



"The roundtables that I have participated in were the Lifelong Learning and the Accountability sessions. First Nations women voiced their concerns and issues regarding gender equality, more representation at regional and national levels, and keeping families healthy and strong which will ensure healthier communities for the future."

– Audrey Zoe, AFN Women's Council

(Fred Cattroll Photo)



Lifelong learning

SUMMARY of OUTCOMES

The Roundtable on Lifelong Learning (education) was held in two sessions. The Early Childhood Education/K-12 session was held on November 13-14 in Winnipeg, and the Post-Secondary Education/Skills Development session was held on November 18-19 in Ottawa. The Minister of Indian Affairs, Andy Scott, hosted both sessions. In doing so, he spoke to the need for First Nations, Inuit and Métis to control their own educational systems through the development of local curricula and teacher training. He also referred to the Human Development Index to point out that higher education leads to a higher life expectancy and better quality of life.

The Chiefs' Committee on Education (CCOE) and National Indian Education Council (NIEC) held a retreat in Vancouver, and met prior to both sessions, to ensure that First Nations educational needs and outcomes with respect to jurisdiction and resourcing would be raised throughout the Roundtables. The CCOE and NIEC, along with other First Nations participants, also expanded upon what jurisdiction and resourcing means from a First Nations perspective. Throughout the sessions, as well as in the Final Report, First Nations participants continually reiterated the need to avoid a pan-Aboriginal approach as First Nations needs are unique and locally driven.

Key Questions

Early Childhood Education/K-12 Session

The first day of the Early Childhood Education (ECE)/K-12 session focused on jurisdiction and control, identifying priorities, building capacity, and measuring progress and defining success. The second day of the ECE/K-12 session focused on the development of research and curricula for our educational systems, funding, and the identification and development of locally driven assessment tools/instruments. There was also some discussion about how to identify 'success'.

1. How will we address the issues of jurisdiction and control that are impacting on access to, and success within, ECD and K-12 programs and services?
2. What adaptations and collaborative approaches are needed to improve access to early childhood development and K-12 programming and services?
3. What capacity supports (e.g. human resources, infrastructure, sustainability, etc.) are needed to ensure Aboriginal communities participation and progress on shared ECD and K-12 priorities?
4. How can research and curriculum development be applied to support improved participation and outcomes in ECD and K-12 systems?

Post-Secondary Education/Skills Development Session

The two day Post-Secondary Education (PSE)/Skills Development (SD) session in Ottawa focused on jurisdiction and control, and how governments and First Nations might improve access and coordination in these areas. There was also some discussion around funding, curricula and research, and how First Nations and other groups identify their successes.


- 1, What capacity supports (e.g. human resources, infrastructure, sustainability, etc) are needed to ensure Aboriginal communities participation and progress on shared PSE and Skill Development priorities?
- 2, How can research and curriculum development be applied to support improved participation and outcomes in PSE and skill development?
- 3, How will we address the issues of jurisdiction and control that are impacting on access to, and success within, post-secondary education and skills development programs and services?
- 4, What adaptations and collaborative approaches would contribute to improved levels of access to, and success within, post-secondary education and skills development programming and services?

Facilitators at both Roundtable sessions asked all participants to view the subject from a 'gender' and 'disability' perspective, and to include a focus on 'geographic disparities' in their small group sessions.

Recommendations

First Nations consistently reminded participants that education is a lifelong learning process that starts before birth and is critical to good health and building strong families and communities. Both sessions focused on the importance of honouring treaties and the government's fiduciary obligation in resourcing and establishing First Nations education systems. The importance of the AFN's landmark policies on First Nations education embodied in documents such as *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1973) and *Tradition and Education: A Vision of Our Future* (1988), as well as others, was emphasized.

The first Roundtable session reiterated the need for stronger funding mechanisms for ECE development and the importance of language and curriculum in developing First Nations ECE and K-12 programs. Funding must take a one-window approach, and government departments need to be better coordinated to serve First Nations needs. This session stressed the urgent need to protect First Nations languages which are moving towards extinction within the next twenty years, and support for traditional knowledge through legislation and other types of protection. The development of institutions, and research and policy work that is First Nations led and driven, must be funded, including making laws to establish, control and manage our own institutes across the spectrum of life long learning. Long-term, universal and sustainable funding in ECE was identified as a priority. Short-term proposal driven funding does not work in helping First Nations to develop sustainable long-term capacity with respect to institutions and structures. Technological development in remote communities, and the protection of intellectual property, was also emphasized.



The Roundtable in Ottawa included the same participant representative groups as the earlier Roundtable, along with some of the directors of the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (NAIHL). The Roundtable on PSE/SD reiterated the need for jurisdiction and control, as well as the need for long-term, universal, and sustainable funding for First Nations Institutes of Higher Learning. Many First Nations higher learning institutes are proposal driven which is simply an impediment to long-term sustainable capacity and institutional development. NAIHL members stated that these institutes presently offer some basis for research and development, but limited funding does not allow them to develop higher level research capacity because they are struggling with the day to day issues of proposal-driven funding. Many adult learners need transition programs which will allow them to move towards their career goals.

There is a need for more First Nations institutes and centers for research to help First Nations PSE students and lifelong learners to achieve their goals in life. The PSE/SD Roundtable also reiterated the need for a one-window approach to funding. Funding must go directly to First Nations, and every aspect of that funding, including research, must be controlled by First Nations. Universal and sustainable funding includes core capital, research, operations and management, curriculum development, student and faculty support, library development, professional development, recreation, childcare, housing and all aspects of student life. The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSP), Institutional Student Support Program (ISSP) and Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holder (AHRDA) programs must be revamped. It was strongly stated that First Nations students should not be denied PSE funding.

The development of language and cultural programs at higher institutes of learning should be First Nations driven and funded because they form the basis of support and development for PSE students both on and off reserve. Mentorship, guidance and career awareness should be supported at all levels beginning as early as Grade 5. First Nations curricula, de-colonization and racial education awareness are also needed in the provincial systems. First Nations need to know where their funding is going within the provincial systems. First Nation's Elders, advisors and boards must have equal representation and remuneration for their expertise. First Nations institutes and organizations must have the capacity and funding to monitor their own progress and development. Program flexibility is necessary because it leads to greater institutional development. First Nations need resources to study population demographics to determine what the First Nations PSE/SD needs are in relation to their own populations, as well within the context of the Canadian labour market, both now and in the future. Yukon expressed the need to have a tripartite table to deal with self-governing and non-self-governing First Nations concerns relating to education.

Next Steps

1. Regular communication with Chiefs' Committee on Education and technical committee.
2. Confirm a First Nations Education Action Plan at AFN Policy Forum April 19-21, 2005.
3. Report at the Annual General Assembly in July 2005.
4. Education identified as a priority for the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in Fall 2005.

Background Paper on Lifelong Learning

Vision

- The creation and maintenance of sustainable and successful First Nations education systems that support culturally relevant and contemporary lifelong learning.
- Raising education attainment and life opportunities of First Nation people so that they are equal to those of the general Canadian population, through First Nation ownership and control of education and through specific investments including building and improving elementary and secondary school systems as well as post-secondary education and skills development systems.

Issue Statement

- First Nations subscribe to the philosophy of lifelong learning controlled at the community level. Traditionally, learning begins when a child is born, and family members are responsible for teaching that child who they are, where they live, and what their role in the society will be. Over the course of history, through colonization, the establishment of residential schools, and other challenges, First Nations traditional approaches to education been severely tested. However, the fundamental belief that lifelong learning is the most appropriate way to educate citizens has been sustained.
- The health and vitality of First Nations communities is directly linked to the overall educational successes of its members, including culture and language competencies. First Nations must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to build and sustain strong, healthy First Nation communities and economies and to contribute to the success of Canada's overall economy. Adequate and consistent resources are required in order to design, develop and deliver quality life-long education.
- Given the large youthful population of our communities, strategic and lasting investments in education are critical to build the foundation for our economic viability and to secure the rightful place of First Nations within the broader Canadian society.
- The First Nation and Inuit Child Care initiative supports around 7,000 child care spaces in 390 First Nations and Inuit communities across Canada to a greater and lesser extent. There remains a tremendous unmet need in communities that currently have some access to Early Childhood Development funding and in those that do not have any access at all as of yet.
- In the December 2001 Throne Speech, the Governor General of Canada made the following statement:

The most enduring contribution Canada can make to First Nations is to raise the standard of education on-reserve. The government will work with the recently created National Working Group on Education

to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children, and take immediate steps to help First Nations children with special needs. (p.4)

- Moving into the 21st century, First Nations peoples will increasingly live and work in a knowledge-based society and economy that will require them to be “adaptable, resilient and ready to learn throughout life”. To prepare First Nations for these requirements, fundamental educational changes must become a priority for the federal government. It means that the Government of Canada must fully accept its responsibility and commit to providing the necessary funding to enable First Nations to design and deliver comparable programs and services to those provided by the provinces and territories for their residents; and to support First Nations peoples in their own unique development goals and lifelong learning journeys.
- The Ministers National Working Group on Education states in their Final Report:

“First Nations education is in a crisis... First Nations need to be viable and accountable decision makers in the planning and implementation of programs designed for excellence in education.” (Final Report, 2002, p.2)
- There are approximately 485 band operated / INAC funded schools. In 2002-03, almost 120,000 on-reserve elementary/secondary students were recorded on INAC’s Nominal Roll Student Registry System. Over 60% attended band operated schools in 2001-02, 1.4% in federal schools, and 36% in provincial schools.
- Currently only 32% of First Nation children are graduating from Grade 12-13 in on- reserve schools. This statistic has been consistent since 1994 and into 2000. That is, 70% of our population has less than a high school education. Provincial outcomes are no better.
- INAC’s current policy approach has been in place since September 2001. The department funds instructional services and student support services (transportation, counseling, accommodation, and financial assistance). In 2003-04, INAC’s planned elementary/secondary education spending is approximately \$1.1 Billion. This does not include the construction of on-reserve elementary and secondary schools nor operating and maintenance costs for educational facilities.
- The AFN has been working jointly and cooperatively with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) officials to prepare all the required documentation to support INAC in developing defensible cases for:
 - The development of a First Nations Special Education Policy and a new, permanent funding mechanism;
 - The implementation of recommended changes to existing Post Secondary Education policies and programs and the acquisition of new funds needed to address the demand; and
 - A new funding mechanism and increased resources for First Nations Schools;

- In the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), it was recommended that the Government of Canada:

Support the development of Aboriginally controlled education systems by providing funding commensurate with the responsibilities assumed by Aboriginal nations and their communities...given the requirements of institutional and program development, costs of serving small or dispersed communities, and special needs accruing from past failures of education services” (Recommendation 3.5.2 b).

Recognize and fulfill its obligation to treaty nations by supporting a full range of education services (Recommendation 3.5.20).

- First and foremost, change means that governments must formally recognize the right of self-determination of First Nations peoples under international law. Article 15 of the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1994) states that

Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and language” (p.109).

- To ensure that learning is available, is of high quality and is culturally appropriate to First Nations peoples throughout their lives, it is time for governments to work in collaboration with First Nations to make the required changes so that First Nations peoples can enjoy the same standard of living provided to all Canadians.
- Skills development funding to First Nations has been in place to some extent for a number of years. However, the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy does not provide for a coordinated long term approach and, as a result, does not allow for a true ongoing, strategic building of training institutes to ensure the building increased First Nations capacity and the development of First Nations as a key emerging source of trained and skilled workers for the expanding Canadian demand for skilled workers.
- The AFN calls upon the federal government to begin fulfilling its commitment to First Nations students by providing the necessary levels of funding for First Nations to develop educational systems that are comparable to those that exist in provinces and territories; and to support First Nations education and skills development as a requisite tool for nation building. With a lifelong learning cycle that includes **child, youth, adult, and elder students, funding the delivery of educational services covers a broad range.**
- The Government of Canada must demonstrate the political will to support First Nations control over the education of their peoples. Control of First Nations education is a cornerstone of self-government. Resources are required to build the necessary infrastructure to support educational system development.

- The Government of Canada must also recognize the gains of investing in First Nations education by providing adequate and equitable funding. The challenges our peoples face will require a realistic fiscal infusion to begin to implement action plans to address First Nations educational issues, to make improvements to existing educational systems and to close the educational gap between First Nations and Canadian populations.
- First Nations' languages are all endangered, some much more critically than others. All First Nations' languages and dialects are important and contain knowledge and perspectives found nowhere else on earth. Initiatives to date have not provided an adequate response to this critical situation.

Key Objectives:

The AFN (AFN) Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE), the National Indian Education Council (NIEC) and the AFN Education Sector have identified three key theme areas that require immediate attention: **jurisdiction**, **infrastructure** and **adequate funding**.

- Jurisdiction over all aspects of the lifelong education of First Nations members.
- The establishment of adequate sustainable resource mechanisms for First Nations education systems that include: governance, program, capital, and administrative funding mechanisms.
- The creation of a comprehensive, integrated First Nations education system inclusive of Early Childhood Development, K-12, Training, and Post Secondary.
- To fund the design and implementation, by First Nations, of regionally appropriate accountability and evaluative systems to measure the success of First Nations Education Systems.

Discussion Topics/Key Questions

Overview Discussions

Jurisdiction

OBJECTIVE

- Recognition that education for First Nations peoples is a matter of inherent, treaty and Aboriginal rights recognized in the Canadian Constitution and international law.
- Any provincial role in First Nation decision making must be removed. The federal government must not off-load its fiduciary obligation for First Nations education to provincial governments. Jurisdictional barriers must be removed, particularly provincial laws and regulations which hinder the enhancement and promotion of First Nation values, beliefs, traditions and cultures.

DISCUSSION

- First Nations seek the same rights that have been accorded to provincial and territorial governments regarding the control of education, including the necessary financial resource levels and the ability to **exercise decision making authority without interference from the federal government** is required.
- Since education shapes the minds and values of First Nation students, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have full legislative, fiscal, administrative and operational control over First Nation education and educational systems.
- Provincial comparability limits First Nations jurisdiction over education. First Nations standards must be based upon a First Nations philosophy and vision of education. First Nations do not wish to emulate provincial systems and standards that have consistently failed to meet the needs of First Nations students. With respect to comparable levels of funding, First Nations will require funding that is based on need which may exceed the levels of funding provided in the respective province.
- The federal government must realize that there is a need to develop, with First Nations government, instruments, laws and policy making procedures at the national and local level to support and give confidence that the implementation and First Nation jurisdiction over education will be a reality in the near future.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- How will the government support the negotiation and implementation of First Nations jurisdiction and control over lifelong learning, including the urban, rural and isolated settings?

Adequate Funding

OBJECTIVE

- Adequate, sustainable funding mechanisms to support First Nations education programming needs.
- First Nation education financing must be derived from community based needs identification processes. A new fiscal framework for the financing of First Nations education must be negotiated with the federal government immediately. A comprehensive review and evaluation of First Nations education financing must be conducted.
- Adequate funding must be provided for both capital and infrastructure to build and upgrade education and training facilities.

DISCUSSION

- Funding for elementary/secondary education in First Nation schools is provided based on a funding formula. Existing funding arrangements focus on government accountability and not on local community needs.

- At present funding provided to First Nations schools is not sufficient to meet programming needs. There are documented gaps in funding that impede the provision of quality education services. Shortfalls have been identified in several areas and further research is needed to quantify other gaps.
- As the tuition rates were part of the block funding made available to DIAND Regions, there was no opportunity for those rates to accommodate increases to teacher salaries that arise from the conclusion of collective agreements.
- In the provincial education systems, funding mechanisms and a legislative basis for operation have allowed for the creation of long standing school districts or boards which oversee the governance and overall operation of schools that operate under their authority within a geographical catchment area.
- This type of mechanism only exists in rare cases in Canada in relation to First Nations schools. As a result, economies of scale and efficiencies of collective operations are not available to the vast majority of First Nations schools. There is the need for the federal government to provide equitable and comparable funding and educational services to First Nations which provinces/territories provide to non-First Nations.
- Other areas of programming still require research and support to quantify the financial needs
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- How do we ensure adequate and sustainable funding, based on the real cost driver factors present in First Nations communities, including significantly increased student population, special needs, geographical considerations, social factors, outdated or inadequate facilities and equipment.

First Nations Schools, Education and Skills Development Systems

OBJECTIVE

- First Nations are seeking to create an integrated system that allows for the smooth transition from Early Childhood Development into the K-12 system, and then from the K-12 system into either training opportunities or the post secondary system.


DISCUSSION

- The federal government considers delegated authority sufficient to meet the principle of First Nation jurisdiction/control over education. Under delegated authority, the government retains control over the determination and allocation of resources needed to establish, manage, and operate local First Nation schools. First Nation education authorities must comply with federal directives. Within federal and band operated schools, First Nations are required to comply with provincial educational policies and standards which do not include culturally or linguistically appropriate teaching and methodological approaches.

- At present the federal and provincial governments are taking a compartmentalized approach to education. They have broken up the responsibility for segments of education amongst many different departments. For example, the inclusion of Headstart programming within Health Canada, Child Care within Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, and K4 and K5 within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development when each serve the same segment of the First Nations population 0 to six years old.
- The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples clearly supported the requirement for educational change:

Aboriginal people should expect equity of results from education in Canada. This will not happen if the education system continues unchanged. For significant change to occur, Aboriginal people must have the authority to organize their education and to influence how their children are educated "(p.442).

- The provision of key second and third level services such as a central administration, student counseling services, speech pathology, student assessment and support teams, community outreach programs, etc are not available to First Nation schools. It is critical that this type of school board mechanism be enabled locally and regionally with a type of national networking system that will enable information sharing, common approaches to policy and program development, bulk acquisitions of equipment and materials, etc. . . . Even such a basic mechanism as a system for mandatory information gathering and data management of attendance and education participation rates is not in place overall in First Nations schools funded by INAC. These are key services that teachers, students and parents take for granted in public schools in general.
- Also, in order to ensure quality education programs, we need to develop our own systems based on holistic education. Holistic education incorporates culture, traditional values, spirituality, the physical, emotional and social well being of the learner. New fiscal policies designed to reflect and respond to the language, needs, beliefs, traditions and values of the people they serve are critical. Provincial systems are not relevant to the beliefs and visions for the future of First Nation children. The enactment and support of policies which encourage and require the participation of Elders and community members as contributors are also paramount in the sustainability of First Nation culture and language. Source: A Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education (1989) and Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century (1996), RCAP, (1996)
- Finally, parity and equality of opportunity for all First Nations students regardless of geography and isolation is required. Community ownership of First Nation education systems must be facilitated through training designed to facilitate empowerment. The development of resource centers are required for the active sharing of materials.
- By making these linkages First Nations believe they will be able to ensure greater success for their students. Government can facilitate this by breaking down these artificial barriers and creating a more comprehensive lifelong learning system.

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- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
 - How can First Nations peoples and government, in collaboration, establish comprehensive programming in early childhood development and K-12 areas?

Focused Discussions

Early Childhood Development

OBJECTIVE

- The promotion of physical, socio-economic, cultural and intellectual nurturing of our children.

DISCUSSION

- Learning begins at infancy. Quality child care and parent support programs will assist children's healthy development which in turn will contribute to them being "school ready".. Currently, prevention and family support programs are in dire need. In terms of First Nation Child Welfare, the lack of dollars up front to assist families creates crisis situations which requires children to be taken "into care" which is often times unnecessary. This is not cost effective and is contributing to the high numbers of First Nations children in the child welfare system.
- The Assembly of First Nation's strategy is focused on three programs – Aboriginal Head Start, First Nations and Inuit Child Care and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAS/E).
- The funding announced in 2002 for the Early Childhood Development Strategy for First Nations and other Aboriginal children has mainly enhanced existing child care spaces and created a limited number of new spaces. However, many outstanding needs still exist. These include: capital funding for new child care centres; funding for training; funding to provide for adequate salaries and the ability to provide salary increments; more child care spaces, especially for special needs children (such spaces cost almost double a regular space) and increased programs for parents.
- Early Childhood Development (ECD) encompasses more than the three programs listed above. A comprehensive network which encompasses maternal health programs, parenting programs, services for special needs children, quality, accessible child care, and assistance for vulnerable families is also required. Moreover a longer-term funding commitment is required for integrating a comprehensive early childhood development network for First Nations.
- Of particular interest to First Nations in the current budget is Fetal Alcohol FAS/FAE. Currently in Canada, First Nations children are taken into care at four times the rate of non-aboriginal children. A great many of these children are afflicted with FAS/FAE. This is a serious concern for parents, communities, government and institutions.

- Without adequate support, families of FAS/FAE children can find it difficult to cope, leaving the children at risk of neglect and abuse. Strategies are emerging, as is the awareness of ways to address FAS/FAE issues through prevention, identification, and intervention efforts. With support and intervention, FAS/FAE affected individuals can lead productive lives. Most importantly, people are beginning to realize that FAS and FAE are community issues that need to be addressed on an individual, family, and community level, utilizing partnerships at the regional and national level.
- While provincial governments are moving towards more flexible service delivery that included in-home support services for FAS/FAE children, First Nations have not been able to do so. The current First Nation Child and Family Services (FNCFS) funding formula does not provide adequate resources to allow for FNCFS agencies to meet their existing legislated requirement in respect to prevention, alternative programs and least disruptive/intrusive measures for children at risk. (i.e. in-home support services) This fact is recognized by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
- The AFN asserts that this gap in funding should be closed to ensure that all legislated requirements are met as a first step towards building a sustainable, culturally-appropriate and effective First Nation child welfare system. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada estimates that this would require \$146 million over 5 years.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- How can First Nations peoples and government, in collaboration establish comprehensive programming in early childhood development?

A First Nations Student Assessment System

OBJECTIVE

- To design and implement regionally appropriate accountability and evaluative systems to measure the success of First Nations Education Systems.

DISCUSSION

- First Nations schools are committed to providing quality programming to their students. A key element to any public education system in Canada, and indeed in most western countries that is not present for First Nations Schools, is a system of comprehensive annual student assessment. All provincial governments have this system in place, and as a result, any parent whose child attends a public school can be informed as to the quality of the program his or her child is in, the academic performance of the school in comparison to a district and provincial average, and the performance of provincial systems in comparison to a national average. While it is very likely that many First Nations schools are producing positive results, there is no mechanism to demonstrate how a particular cohort of students is performing, nor how an individual school is performing. Funding needs to be included in the funding formula to accommodate this exercise.

- In addition, a great deal of research has shown that a simple opting into provincial assessment systems would not be fair to First Nations students, for reasons of cultural inappropriateness and the absence of norms for First Nations students in these assessment tools. In some cases, some First Nations may choose to adopt some tools or aspects of provincial assessment systems, but this too involves costs that are not currently covered in the federal schools funding mechanism.
- With technological advances there are new school administration information systems available that will assist with the day-to-day running of schools and have a built in capacity to collect and collate data.
- In order to maximize the utility of these systems there needs to be a significant amount of planning done to ensure that the data that is required for accountability to communities, as well as central agencies.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- What educational data is essential at each level of lifelong learning?
- What new assessment tools are required for First Nations schools to implement a student assessment system?

Curriculum Development for First Nations Culture and Languages

OBJECTIVE

- To develop curriculum that is culturally appropriate to the community. The Elders contribution and role must comprise a significant component in this area.
- A funding mechanism similar to the elementary/secondary French immersion and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs across the country be established for First Nations culture and languages programming in elementary and secondary programs.

DISCUSSION

- The federal government has long held the belief that funding for curriculum development is included in the tuition provided for First Nations students attending First Nations schools. However, as costs such as instructional support out pace increases in the tuition rates there has been little money available for this important function.
- For many years, federal funding has enabled the development and expansion of two very popular and successful elementary/secondary French immersion and ESL programs across the country. The Federal government provides a top up to the provincial base rates for both French Immersion and English as a Second Language training, in addition to funding amounts for curriculum development and professional development of teachers. This type of language funding has never been available to First Nations schools for First Nations culture and language programming, curriculum or professional development.

- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- What local and regional mechanisms can be built to ensure the development of high quality, community generated language and culture curriculum?
- What resources are required to establish high quality bilingual and immersion programs for FN languages?
- How will communities measure the effectiveness of their culture and languages programs and services?

Capital and Infrastructure

OBJECTIVE

- Adequate, appropriate, safe and comfortable physical facilities, complemented by adequate, appropriate and necessary equipment and physical infrastructure.

DISCUSSION

- In recent years, some very fine schools have been built in First Nations communities and these facilities likely meet both federal and provincial building standards for school buildings. However, the policy guideline that that these requirements be met is quite recent. Many schools on Indian Reserves in Canada most likely do not meet both federal and provincial requirements. In addition, INAC funding authorities have not consistently provided for elements such as the building of playgrounds and gymnasiums, or computer connectivity.
- In addition, there is a waiting list of communities that would like to build new schools either to replace outdated buildings or to have a school facility for their community. The AFN calls for an immediate infusion of funding to provide an appropriate refit to schools that do not meet fire and safety codes, that do not meet provincial standards for schools, and to deal with the waiting list for new community facilities.
- Finally, as technology has become an integral part of education systems, there has been little attention to the needs of First Nations schools. Funding is required to ensure that First Nations schools keep pace with the rapidly changing technological environment.
- INAC does not amortize capital construction over a number of years, but rather builds in any year what the budget for that year permits.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- Is there a willingness to adapt the GoC funding methods for school construction to allow a more ambitious process to be implemented for school construction and facility upgrades.

First Nations Special Education

OBJECTIVE

- The closing the educational gap addressing the special education needs of First Nations students.

DISCUSSION

- The AFN Education Secretariat has been actively researching Special Education since 1997 in order to develop and implement a national First Nations Special Education (SE) Policy as well as acquire adequate and permanent funding to support a First Nations Special Education Program.
- As with all education programs, the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that SE is adequately resourced. A commitment from the federal government is required in order to fulfill its moral and legal obligation to provide educational services to all First Nations children.
- While initial program funding has been provided by the federal government, this has been found to be inadequate to meet the needs of First Nations students. Currently, First Nation schools are not provided with the adequate resources to allow them to provide the services and programs required by students with special needs. As a result, the rights of those students are not being realized. First Nations students with special needs are either not provided with the services and programs they require, or are not able to enroll in a First Nation school, denying them the right to attend the school of their choice, often forcing them and their families to relocate off-reserve in order to receive some basic level of service.
- To date, INAC's approach to gain support of Cabinet for a First Nations SE Policy and funding has focused on comparability to provincial educational systems and standards rather than accepting the policy, principles, funding mechanisms and implementation strategies proposed by the CCOE-NIEC and AFN Education Sector on behalf of the First Nations communities of Canada.
- There is a need for the federal government to provide the necessary funding to enable First Nations to provide equivalent educational services to those provided by provinces/territories to non-First Nations. At this time, provinces have Special Education policies and funding and First Nations schools do not. There is a critical lack of Special Education programming in First Nations schools and that means that children must leave the comfort of their communities to attend provincial systems, which feel foreign to them.
- In November 2000, the AFN Education Sector requested \$359 M for SE. The 2001 budget committed a mere \$60M over two years, a stark contrast to the amount identified in order to resource direct program and service delivery of SE, fulfill capacity and training requirements, and develop an intervention based, holistic approach to SE.
- The \$60M was used to conduct assessments of First Nations students and implement an accountability framework in order to document the "real need" of First Nations with respect to a national SE program. Thus, the initial funding request stands. The AFN, CCOE-NIEC have been working jointly with INAC to develop the business case to return to Cabinet this Fall for increased, permanent funding for SE.
- Additional resources are being sought for the 2005-2006 fiscal year and beyond.

SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:

- Is there a willingness for the GoC and the AFN to collaboratively develop a five year plan to ensure that special education programs and services are expanded to meet the needs of FN communities.
- Is there any collaboration possible between FN schools and provincial or private schools in order to better provide high cost special needs to FN students in their own settings?

Post Secondary Education

OBJECTIVE

- To address the backlog of First Nations students who wish to attend PSE programs but cannot

DISCUSSION

- PSE funding provides First Nations peoples with the opportunity to access higher learning, produces highly skilled and educated First Nations peoples, increases employment rates, decreases social assistance dependency, provides higher standard of living, and improves capacity in the area of self-government and self-sufficiency. Moreover, in dollar terms alone welfare is more than twenty times as expensive as university education. It is in the interest of all Canadians for the federal government to invest in the higher education opportunities of First Nations peoples.
- The challenge is to consolidate and strengthen the gains which have been made in post secondary education, perhaps by focusing on the early preparation of First Nation students and on the social and economic context which education takes place. The pattern of delayed or incomplete success at the post secondary level suggests that there may be weaknesses in First Nation student's basic education and/or difficulties in the student's social and economic environment which tends to limit their success in Post secondary programs.
- INAC has not changed the PSE policies/programs since 1988 or kept current with the increasing costs of higher education. Policy changes in 1988 resulted in reduced numbers of students eligible for funding; applicants being placed on waiting lists; limited access to PSE by off reserve residents; outdated guidelines and amounts for student living costs, tuition fees and educational expenditures; discouraged and stressed First Nations peoples – students experienced financial hardships, many had to drop out; and subsidization of funding through other social programs.
- An examination of the Post-Secondary Education (PSE) policies and programs of the federal government aimed at youth and adult First Nations students clearly showed a huge discrepancy between the cost to attend provincial/territorial education systems and the funding allocated to First Nations PSE students. There is an urgent need to address the backlog of First Nations students who wish to attend PSE programs but cannot, due to the lack of adequate funding. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 First Nations PSE applicants were unable to access funding.

- Using conservative estimates, a total of \$880,305,332 is required for PSE. This includes \$614,199,530 for the Post Secondary Student Support Program; \$73,703,944 for the Indian Studies Support Program; \$110,555,915 for First Nations Post Secondary Institutes; \$79,845,939 for administration; and, \$2,000,000 for the development of a database. Thus an additional \$592,305,328 in new money is needed for PSE for the 2004-2005 fiscal period. **The AFN proposes that a collaborative process be developed to ensure that the maximum utilization of existing funding for PSE is brought about.** Following this, funding should increase incrementally over the next 5 years to enable increased student access, increased student support and further institutional development.
- It is time for governments to fund and support the development of First Nations institutions of higher learning that are controlled by First Nations peoples. A variety of First Nations controlled colleges, institutes and community learning centres have already been developed. However, these organizations experience a chronic lack of funding and also the reluctance of mainstreams post-secondary institutions to recognize their courses and certificates/degrees. Courses and programs offered by these First Nations institutes of higher learning are highly relevant and valued by First Nations communities; it has been demonstrated that these institutions provide a supportive learning environment and students are encouraged to persist and complete their courses/programs. In addition, among other programs, these institutions often provide shorter term, employment oriented training which assists individuals greatly in finding employment.
- To ensure that learning is available to First Nations peoples throughout their lives, it is time for governments to work in collaboration with First Nations to make the required changes so that First Nations peoples can enjoy the same standard of living provided to all Canadians.
- SOME POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DISCUSSION ARE:
- How should the existing PSSSP and ISSP programs be revised to ensure maximum impact in targeted areas?
- How can FN PSE institutions establish a cross articulation of their programs with mainstream PSE institutions for maximum program transferability?
- What legal framework will be required to permit create fully accredited and very credible FN PSE and skills development institutions?

Skills Development

OBJECTIVE

- Secure enhancements to key initiatives that support the First Nation employment support programs and services while improving the urban delivery of programs and services to First Nation citizens
- Increase the current capacities and coordination capabilities of the First Nation labour market development infrastructure established by communities (AHRDAs)

DISCUSSION

- Another critical development that affects communities in a far-reaching manner relates to efforts to increase an active and equipped labour force. Simply put, although the federal government can refer to countless best practices examples on First Nation human resources and skilled development, the support available to communities to appropriately equip their citizens, regardless of residence, is suffering.
- Presently, federal support to communities and its infrastructure to develop a skilled labour force and human resource capacity has been funded at 1991 levels, while pressures continue to mount. The First Nation burgeoning youth population continues to age, educational high school completion rates and literacy rates continue to suffer, support the First Nation infrastructure O&M in this regard is relatively unfunded (while similar non-First Nation levels of government are funded); altogether this is creating an incredible pressure on localized programs to address these issues in addition to training interventions that would assist citizens to enter the work force.
- A new investment is called for to positively impact upgrading and literacy for the adult population who need to become work-ready; increase the use of resources to skill training and seizing more economic opportunities.
- Presently, the national Aboriginal organizations are working with the federal counterparts to promote the need for enhancements and further support of the existing relationships set up between First Nations and government. Urban delivery, will make up part of the required enhancements. (AFN Chiefs Committee on Human Resources Development First Nation Perspectives on the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy; sections of work completed by the Conference Board of Canada for the AFN on the Economic and Social Benefits of Investing in First Nations)
- *Discussions regarding employment and training strategic issues with Capacity Building; **National Aboriginal Resources Allocation Model (NARAM)**;*
 - *Including, employment Insurance Reform; Data Collection; Agreement Templates; Employment training services for persons with disabilities; Childcare; double standard toward Operations and Maintenance funds; need for funding to develop “services”, and the representation of non-enumerated reserves in the NARAM*
 - *First Nations continue to promote the need to handle their population counts. Non-enumerated communities number 33 in the last census with significant populations. The NARAM is not seen to be well-equipped to handle this matter.*
- *Discussions regarding enhancements to the **Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS)***
 - *The current strategy deals with 1991 figures and the increase in youth as labour market entrants will increase demand on the AHRDAs.*

- *The loss in flexibility and respect for First Nation governance capacities from previous initiatives to the first AHRDS, including funding losses (and pendulum funding swings from east to west) to some First Nation AHRDAs*
- *Education initiatives prior to skills development training needs to be strengthened.*
- *An increase in funding to **urban** AHRDAs that have not any lines of accountability to communities will be an issue. First Nation AHRDAs have begun to set out principles on an urban strategy and consider this issue. Urban citizenry issues are huge. First Nations and their AHRDAs processes must be part of the solution finding exercises. Assumptions are potentially being made that AHRDAs do not or have not reached out to communities. There is also concern around unilateral decisions made by HRSDC in forming Urban AHRDAs*
- *Building on the existing good relationship is important. HRSDC must be able to increase managerial and administrative authorities to communities/ AHRDAs, as the present agreement arrangements are seen as stepping backward.*
- *The low representation of disability priorities in disabilities*
- *A lack of capacity to develop community infrastructure for day cares and training facilities*
- *The possibility to lobby for an increase for enhancements to the AHRDS will be helpful to the very close of business. Increases may be based on the need to continue to build on the positive results already achieved by AHRDAs; the need to amend the flaws and areas of under-representation in the current AHRDS; realignment of federal initiatives that have been established that run on a separate track from AHRDAs but are dealing with the same constituent needs (Aboriginal Skills & Employment Program; Urban Aboriginal Strategy; AWPI; provincial transfers); employed youth; the economic gains and federal savings to be achieved to ensure the national economy has the labour force it needs to prosper; and to help ward off the predicted decline in the national economy. (Other positions to help forward this position can be presented.)*
- *AFN funding for 2004-2005: AFN has a continued role to play in the next phases of the ARHDS. All national organizations have been cut in funding by 50%; however this is particularly difficult for the AFN given the compounded efforts to be taken to reach, and hopefully bring to consensus, a much larger constituency.*
- *Complementarity of social programs: AFN has invited First Nation AHRDA managers to participate in a fall focus group on this matter. First Nation social assistance practitioners have also been invited by the Health and Social Development Secretariat.*
- *We are also interested in exploring specific ideas such as creating a First Nations youth job corp. to create opportunities for youth to contribute to their communities and gain valuable experience at the same time.*

Cross-cutting Issues

Languages

- Language and culture are part of a lifelong learning process that spans from birth to death (and both physical and spirit world) and helps us to understand our unique roles and responsibilities as individuals and members of our nations.
- Language retention is critical for establishing a foundation for education jurisdiction and cultural programming at all levels, from early childhood through to post-secondary education in conjunction with the ECD, K-12 and institutes of higher learning in the life long-learning process.

Economic Development

Lack of qualified Aboriginal workers prevent more employers from hiring Aboriginal people.

Lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues by managers/employers is also an issue.

Environment

Modern, European notions of schooling have diminished the traditional learning and traditional means of passing on information central to the First Nation culture and way of life. The traditional knowledge of First Nations peoples has been diminished by a classroom centered approach to learning.

First Nation systems of lifelong learning must strive to ensure that traditional knowledge is maintained and that the vital connection of people to the land is restored through alternative, more traditional, approaches to teaching to compliment the classroom experience.

Options for Provincial/Territorial Involvement

Separate discussions with provinces and territories, government departments and First Nations are needed to support First Nations education objectives.

Provinces must work with Aboriginal institutions to ensure there is harmonization for accreditation and academic standards.

Provincial and Territorial governments responsible for education jurisdiction need to be engaged in discussions to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and histories into the mainstream education systems.





Canada - Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable
Sectoral Session

Housing

HOUSING





Housing



“The \$700 million investment in First Nations health will be a poor one if not matched by an investment in First Nations Housing.”

- Chief Morley Watson,
FSIN

(AFN PHOTO)



Housing

SUMMARY of OUTCOMES

The Sectoral Session on Housing was held in Ottawa on November 24-25, 2004. The Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) Housing Secretariat hosted a caucus session for First Nations participants prior to the Sectoral Session in order to strategize and ensure consistency in messaging. This preparatory measure proved to be extremely useful as the outcomes will illustrate.

The Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Joe Fontana, hosted the event and provided opening remarks. The Minister referred to a national housing backlog of 20,000 to 35,000 units, noting that the backlog is growing at a rate of 2200 units per year. He also referred to 16,000 units requiring major repairs, and 5,200 units needing replacement. There was specific mention of the high rate of Aboriginal homelessness, and the growing numbers of Aboriginal women being affected by housing issues. The Minister indicated that the federal government is looking to increase the availability of affordable housing. Their financial commitment next fiscal year is \$262 million on-reserve (this is in fact \$7 million less than was spent in fiscal year 2002/03). There was some disappointment among First Nations participants who felt that the numbers presented did not reflect the reality. Furthermore, the lack of any direct references by the Minister to the need to recognize First Nations jurisdiction, to a government-to-government relationship, or to a treaty right to shelter was also noted.

Overall, the AFN welcomed the Roundtable process. First Nations participants felt that it was a useful forum, that key messages were effectively expressed, and that it provided important networking and lobbying opportunities. In addition, the Minister's closing remarks reiterated that there was a "commitment [to this issue] on the part of the Government", noting that the "will is there to move forward".

Key Questions

1. What collaborative approaches would address the diversity of jurisdictional issues that impact on the ability of Aboriginal peoples to exercise control and governance over how their housing needs are met?
2. How can the factors affecting the current supply of housing be addressed in ways that increase availability for Aboriginal peoples in diverse circumstances?
3. What strategic approaches can be pursued to reduce deficiencies and improve the quality of housing available to Aboriginal peoples?
4. What are the key issues that affect housing affordability and what systemic adjustments and supports are required to enable access by Aboriginal peoples to affordable homes?



Recommendations

1. Jurisdiction

- Systems by which we can exercise authority (institutional and legislative):
 - Work towards housing authorities;
 - Work towards a national housing council.
- Exercising control; proceed on a nation-to-nation basis; control at the planning stages; control of dollar allocations.
- As outlined in the Pre-Budget Submission, fund management and administrations costs of 5% of total budget to provide the capacity to properly manage the existing housing stock.
- The housing transfer agreements must ensure FN interests are protected
- Only through 'transformative change' to First Nations control will solutions be realized.

2. Supply and Availability

- All levels of government must set targets; target the core need to effectively and sustainably address the backlog.
- Government to acknowledge and fund an increased allocation outlined in the AFN's Pre-Budget Submission to a minimum of 8,589 units per year.
- Increased subsidy to a minimum of \$75,000 per unit allocation.
- Resources (\$\$) needed immediately; need 80,000 units.
- Need to maintain existing stock – complete required repairs.
- On-reserve housing policy must be resolved; need more flexible policies, however, First Nations to drive policy revision and new policy development.
- Pan-Aboriginal approach is not appropriate and will not result in success; new funding models are required.
- Review of the Ministerial Loan Guarantee
- Home ownership and other options must be considered.
- More program dollars need to stay in the community.
- Support of training and trades: education & employment.
- More community and individual involvement in housing.
- Use the housing backlog/need as an economic driver.
- Development of a comprehensive housing data base.
- Pursue establishment of a senior negotiation table for real policy change:
 - Review role of government in housing;
 - Review implications of treaty right to shelter.
- Third party management: separate housing from all other community programs.

3. Quality

- Housing as a key health and education determinant.
- Review of building codes; strive to exceed existing codes.
- Human Resource strategy:
- Look at multi-community regimes; collaboration of skills and expertise.
- Undertake inspection process; database development as outlined in the Pre-Budgetary Submission; inspect units on a 3 year cycle and sufficiently fund the database management for a total amount of \$ 15,787,200 per year.
- Economic development initiatives.
- Share best practices.
- Emergency funding (e.g. flood, etc.).
- Flexible financing; flexible housing design (granny/in-law suites).
- Housing authority:
 - Bulk purchasing power; suitable building materials;
 - Information sharing;
 - Incentives to promote partnerships;
 - Joint ventures;
 - Trades.
- Additional subsidies.
- Revolving loan funds.

4. Affordability

- Nation-to-nation approach – all inclusive.
- Real dollars; real solutions; based on Throne Speech, RCAP, federal surplus.
- Policy development to recognize dire need and extreme disparities.
- Fiduciary responsibility.
- Housing Authority.
- 80,000 units are needed now, affordability is only one element.

Next Steps

1. National First Nations Policy Forum April 19-21, 2005, to consider and confirm a First Nations housing Action Plan.
2. Regular communication with CCOHI and technical committees.
3. Reporting at the Annual General Assembly in July 2005.
4. Housing identified as a key priority at the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in Fall 2005.

Background Paper on Housing

Vision:

- We must meet the challenge of creating new approaches and sustainable, transformative change in First Nation housing. The current approach has failed.
- First Nations articulate a vision that shifts the focus from dependence to a model of sustainable delivery of housing and all appropriate infrastructure requirements. In this way, First Nations can not only respond to the need for housing but also to create opportunities for home ownership, employment and economic development.
- The AFN proposes to work with the federal government to address immediate needs - including the delivery of additional housing allocation to address the existing back log as well as addressing renovation requirements - while at the same time working to develop the long-term sustainability of on-reserve housing.
- Strategic investments are required immediately to relieve the crisis and begin the shift towards new, sustainable First Nation housing systems.
- To achieve this shift, First Nations governments must be effectively and meaningfully engaged at the local, regional and national level.

Issue Statement

- Housing is a central priority for First Nations as a safe and secure home environment is a critical link to education, health, economic development and employment.
- Study after study has shown that inadequate housing translates to a poor start in life for the growing, younger generation of First Nation citizens.
- The shortage of First Nations housing in Canada has reached crisis proportions. According to the April 2003 Auditor General's Report, there is a shortage of 8,500 units across the country. However, internal INAC figures suggest that the actual shortage is 20,000 units, with an additional 4,500 new units required annually simply to stop the backlog from increasing.
- A recent publication from the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador states that there is a shortage of 8,700 units in Quebec and Labrador alone, while other First Nations representatives argue the figure is as high as 35,000 nationwide.
- In addition, the Auditor General states that almost half of the existing 95,000 houses require renovations. Again this number is considered low by many First Nations. Given the current rate of construction and the expected demographic explosion (over 50% of First Nations are under the age of 25) this problem will continue to grow.

- INAC estimates that there are 16,000 houses that require major repairs and over 5,000 houses that need to be replaced. These needs far out-pace the current resources available for repairs; only 3,300 units are replaced each year, leaving a growing shortfall that results in further deterioration of current housing conditions. Again, many First Nations consider these numbers low.
- Exasperating this situation is the number of First Nations citizens moving back to First Nations communities, in tandem with a demographic growth in the population that is several times that of the rest of Canada.
- The AFN has proposed a Strategic Framework for this change and distributed the document to all of the First Nation communities across the country requesting a review and input, with the intent of ratification at the December Assembly.
- The Framework outlines a process to initiate Data Collection from all First Nations communities to establish the true scope of the housing crisis.
- The Federal Government must understand the direct link between adequate housing and the health and well being of all Canadians and act accordingly.
- The Federal Government has tabled another surplus measured in the billions.
- There is no place for these types of housing issues in a 21st century, first world country like Canada.

Key Objectives:

Strategic:

- Meaningful participation in establishing strategic direction for First Nations housing.
- Establishment of stronger networks between housing providers of all types.
- Sharing of information and expertise amongst all housing providers, private industry and communities.
- A creation of a National First Nations perspective on the issues of Housing, Infrastructure, Economic Development and Community Planning.

End of next session:

- Establishment of a senior level negotiating table between First Nation and federal government to begin addressing key policy changes and real funding requirements.
- Planning a national policy conference on housing and infrastructure as suggested by the Prime Minister

Key Questions/Discussion Topics

Generic

- The federal government needs to clarify with Treaty nations a modern understanding of existing Treaty terms regarding housing (RCAP).
- A discussion is required on the distinct rights of First Nations and how government policy should support those rights. It is the unique nature of First Nations Rights which drives the need for the creation of innovative and unique approaches to policy development. Policy development must address the unique characteristics, relationships and approaches to housing and infrastructure.
- The distinct rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people cannot be compromised in order to satisfy a uniform Aboriginal Policy approach by the federal government.
- What type of streamlining can take place to increase the efficiency of the delivery model?

Focused

- How can we best address the immediate, critical issues of overcrowding and housing shortage levels?
- How can we work together to transform the First Nation housing crisis in a manner that respects community principles and moves on housing and infrastructure reports and recommendations?
- How can we address access to economic opportunities that should exist in communities as a result of construction in and around their territory?
- How can we increase opportunity and incentives to share natural resources (timber, gravel, water) to increase value of their capital, housing and physical infrastructure economic initiatives?
- How can we create and take advantage of 'spin-off' economies?
- A discussion of land use and management issues relating to housing and infrastructure needs and First Nations Land Registries.
- A discussion of the benefits and potential savings by both First Nation governments and federal governments as part of the steps forward.
- What are the roles of the Provinces and Territories?
- Are there resources available to use a training component in the new housing economies to shore up the aging population of Canada's off reserve work force?

