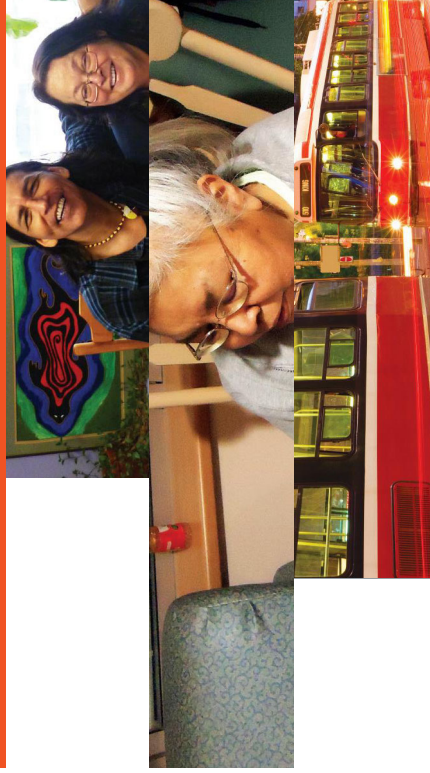




TARP TORONTO ABORIGINAL
RESEARCH PROJECT

FINAL REPORT



TARP

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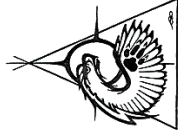
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**TORONTO ABORIGINAL
RESEARCH PROJECT**

FINAL REPORT

**Don McCask
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COMMISSIONED

Toronto Aboriginal Support
Services Council (TASSC)

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City of Toronto Homelessness Partnership Initiative

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Don McCaskill, Kevin FitzMaurice and Jaime Cidro
Authors of this report

Mukwa Associates



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the traditional territory of the Mississauga of the North First Nation, Toronto has a long history of being a place of Aboriginal hunting and fishing, social gathering, and trade. More recently as part of the larger national trend in Aboriginal urbanization, Aboriginal people have been moving to Toronto since the early 1950s. According to the 2006 Census, the Greater Toronto Area has the largest (31.5%) Aboriginal population of any city in Ontario, comprising 13% of the Aboriginal population in Ontario. According to Aboriginal service providers however, Toronto's Aboriginal population is presently estimated at 70,000 residents.¹ In comparing Census data over time, we also find that the Aboriginal population has grown by 33% since 2001 and more than doubled its size since the 1981 population count of 13,000.

Despite this history of Aboriginal people living in Toronto, there has been little systemic, in-depth research pertaining to this reality. The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) has responded to this need and is the largest and most comprehensive study of Aboriginal people in Toronto ever conducted. With a sample of over 1,400 individuals, 14 topics studied and seven methodologies utilized, the TARP study provides an extensive picture of the current situation, success stories, aspirations, and challenges facing Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The TARP study is also unique in that it is a community-based research initiative that has been overseen from start to finish by the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council in collaboration with the TARP Research Steering Committee.

¹ For further reading see City of Toronto, 'Toronto's Racial Diversity' at http://www.toronto.ca/toronto_facts/diversity.htm.

Several overarching themes that emerged from this work are: the persistence of widespread poverty and related social challenges in spite of improvements in education, employment, and income levels and a growing Aboriginal middle class, the pervasiveness of racism against Aboriginal people in Toronto as well as diverse forms of discrimination being expressed within the Aboriginal community itself, the challenges associated with Aboriginal community building, the importance of Aboriginal cultures and the presence of a vibrant Aboriginal arts scene in Toronto.

In spite of improvements in education and degrees of economic success for some members of the Toronto Aboriginal community and the existence of a network of social support agencies, many Aboriginal people struggle with poverty and meeting their basic needs for adequate housing, income and employment, and health. This reality of positive trends in community and social development existing within an overarching condition of poverty and inter-related social problems is reflected throughout all the topics of research. Moreover, the research has shown the existence of a diversity of Aboriginal social services agencies that are working hard to provide culturally-based supports to an increasing number of clients that are experiencing complex problems and multiple needs. The research has further found that improvements in education, employment, and income levels are contributing to a growing population of economically successful, or middle class Aboriginal people that are characterized by a stable social and economic way of life including: secure housing, high levels of education and a stable family life and who reside in neighbourhoods throughout the GTA.

Although not identified as a specific research priority, the problem of racism against Aboriginal people emerged as a finding in almost all of the research areas including men, women, Elders and seniors, the two-spirited population, the middle class, and within the law and justice system. As well, the research further pointed to the prevalence of various forms of internal discrimination being expressed within the Aboriginal community across the same research categories. Racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people is most severely felt within the law and justice system where there is strong evidence of

racial profiling, the undervaluing of Aboriginal victims, and the charging of Aboriginal offenders. As well, the research also revealed a significant amount of internal discrimination experienced by a middle class from other members of the Aboriginal community.

The challenges associated with the development of an Aboriginal community in Toronto also emerged as a larger theme. The TARP research pointed to the difficulties involved in bringing people together socially and politically who are living across all areas of the GTA and who, from culturally, politically, and economically diverse populations include international Indigenous people and the newly Aboriginal 'ethnically mobile' population. A number of Aboriginal social service agencies have come together under the Toronto Aboriginal Social Services Council (TASSC) and are working to create a culturally-based Aboriginal social services community. However, some members both the Aboriginal arts community and the emerging Aboriginal middle class do not feel included in the social services and are associating more with mainstream life in Toronto. The research has pointed to the many possible contributions that these groups can make to social services community and the importance of working to broaden the possibilities of Aboriginal community life in Toronto.

The critical importance of Aboriginal cultures in Toronto also emerged as a key theme throughout this research. In addition to the work Aboriginal social services organizations do in providing culture-based programs and services and in their hosting of community festivals and cultural events, there is a thriving Aboriginal arts community in Toronto. The TARP research revealed Aboriginal arts in all corners of the city from visual art to performing theatre arts to film festivals. The arts community has grown from the efforts of many grassroots artists and patrons and there are a number of Aboriginal arts agencies that support Aboriginal artists and organize performances, productions, festivals and exhibits. Overall, a significant number of Toronto respondents spoke to the important contributions that the Aboriginal arts community is making towards cultural continuity and revitalization in the city.

In terms of key demographic trends, Toronto's Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population across all age categories.

with a large percentage of Aboriginal women heading single parent families. Anishnawbe and Status Indians are the most common cultural and legal categories and many Aboriginal people in Toronto are long-term residents that maintain links to their communities of origin. As well, many Aboriginal people live in a diversity of areas across the GTA, with some areas of high concentration of Aboriginal people living in lower-income neighbourhoods. Aboriginal people in Toronto have made significant educational advancements, with two-spirited people having the highest percentage of university graduate degrees. As well, there are a higher proportion of skilled Aboriginal professionals in Toronto than found in other urban centres in Ontario.

Aboriginal Children and Youth

The TARP findings revealed that Aboriginal families in Toronto are under significant stress as a result of poverty, inadequate access to subsidized childcare and inadequate housing. These stressors, as well as the effects of unlearned parenting skills and addictions, are leading to increased gang involvement by Aboriginal youth.

However, Aboriginal children and youth are also making important contributions to their families and communities and are helping to revitalize Aboriginal culture in the city. Having a strong sense of Aboriginal cultural identity that is grounded in traditional teachings, working with Elders, and the practice of ceremony was identified as essential to positive identity formation, educational success and personal development.

As well, the research findings revealed that Aboriginal youth in Toronto are engaging in all the activities and behaviours of mainstream youth including being computer savvy, engaging in social media, playing video games, watching TV and hanging out with friends. Encouraging the connection between Aboriginal youth and online Aboriginal language and social media, cultural communities should also be encouraged as part of their education and cultural training.

There are currently a number of youth programs in existence in many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies, primarily geared to children

and youth with problems. For example, the Miziwe Biik 'Skills Learning' program aims to ensure that Aboriginal youth participants gain skills, knowledge and work experience to become employed on a full-time basis. Aboriginal youth spoke highly of existing Aboriginal agency youth and cultural programming, but stressed the need for better outreach, communication and cooperation between agencies.

As well, Aboriginal youth strongly value the First Nations School the Native Learning Centre in meeting their cultural and educational needs and pointed to the lack of Aboriginal cultural content, language immersion opportunities and support for learning disabilities in mainstream schools in Toronto. It was further found that Aboriginal youth are looking for a greater sense of community and belonging in the city through the creation of a centralized Aboriginal space and an inclusive form of urban Aboriginal governance.

Recommendations

- 1 That the City of Toronto give priority for Aboriginal Families in the subsidized system to allow for access to culturally specific Aboriginal childcare spaces
- 2 That the City of Toronto builds the cost of transportation supports into the development of programs related to Aboriginal children and families, such as Little Voices Child and Family Centres and Childcares.
- 3 That the City of Toronto enter into discussions with the Province of Ontario and the Federal Government (Health Canada) to look at building demonstration sites where relationships can be nurtured to include 'success practices' in sharing the resources, relationships between Aboriginal Head Start, Pathways, Provincial Children and Youth Services and the City of Toronto's Children Services.
- 4 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies providing children and youth programs and activities get together to better coordinate their services including creating a body of agency staff working in youth programs to coordinate and establish a central facility that can act as a 'hub' where children and youth can go to access services.
- 5 That a number of youth-Elders programs be established to bring these two groups together for traditional cultural and language teaching, including learning to be helpers and assuming appropriate attitudes and behaviours, thus providing youth with a sense of Aboriginal identity and training a new generation to take their place in the Aboriginal community in a positive way.

- 6** That the Toronto District School Board consider establishing an 'Aboriginal school' located outside the downtown area at the intermediate and secondary level modeled after the Afro-centric school. The school could include an Aboriginal language immersion component. Such a school would be separate from the First Nation School currently operating in Toronto.
- 7** That an Aboriginal agency establish a dedicated employment and career preparation course similar to the 'Skills Link' program provided by Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training to assist Aboriginal youth to attain the skills and experience to enter employment. A mentoring program involving successful Aboriginal people from all walks of life could be part of the training. Also, practicum field placements, internships or co-op placements should be included to give trainees experience with real life work situations.
- 8** That an apprenticeship program be developed involving the private sector and labour unions to train Aboriginal youth in specific trades and employment.
- 9** That a 'transitional' housing program be established to house youth who move to Toronto without their parents or family to keep them from living on the street and assist them in adjusting to life in Toronto including referrals, help in finding permanent housing, employment counselling and cultural teachings.
- 10** That Aboriginal athletic leagues be organized throughout the GTA in various sports to engage youth in positive recreational activities.
- 11** That a permanent 'Aboriginal Youth Council' be established to 'give voice' to the concerns of Aboriginal youth in the city. It could be housed in an existing Aboriginal agency or in the Toronto Aboriginal Cultural Centre (see Recommendation # 45) and should receive sufficient funding to conduct their activities.
- 12** That a research study be undertaken on the topic of Aboriginal children and youth with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of their situation and needs.

Aboriginal Men

In spite of some Aboriginal men in Toronto experiencing significant successes in educational attainment, employment and income, there remains a majority who continue to experience significant poverty and related social problems. In relation to Aboriginal women and two-spirited community members, Aboriginal men in Toronto are being 'left behind' and have the lowest incomes, educational attainment rates, least job security and are the least likely to own a home.

Aboriginal men are most likely to work in construction or the trade followed by professional/managerial positions and a significant number of Aboriginal men are single and/or experiencing relationship addictions challenges. There is a need for additional services to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal men in Toronto with specific attention to the re-establishment of a culturally-based Aboriginal residential addiction treatment and detox facility. The closure of Pedahbun Lodge a few years ago has left a major gap in services to Aboriginal men in this regard. The research further pointed to the challenges associated with external racism and internal discrimination against Aboriginal men as well as the hardships of being a single Aboriginal father and need of support and social services.

Recommendations

- 13** That a culturally-based residential treatment and detox centre be established in Toronto to meet the needs of Aboriginal men who are experiencing drug and alcohol addiction issues.
- 14** That culturally-based Aboriginal healing programs be set up focusing on issues that affect Aboriginal men such as relationship counselling, life skills, anger management, parenting skill and addictions treatment.
- 15** That a research project be undertaken to examine the situation of Aboriginal men in Toronto.

Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women in Toronto are both thriving economically as professionals and home owners as well as experiencing multiple, overlapping issues such as poverty, inadequate housing, discrimination, addictions and raising children in lone parent households.

For those Aboriginal women experiencing professional and economic success, they are often taking on leadership roles within the community as either Executive Directors or members of Board of Directors of Aboriginal organizations, volunteers at community events and/or activists for Aboriginal social causes. Notably, the Ontario Native Women's Association have experience running the Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program, in partnership with

Accenture, Microsoft and ACOSYS Consulting. Aboriginal women are also taking on spiritual roles as traditional people and Elders. In many ways, women are the ‘glue’ that keeps the Aboriginal community in Toronto together.

The research also found that some Aboriginal women in Toronto are experiencing relationship challenges, domestic violence, and discrimination and are accessing the services of Anduhyuan Women’s Shelter and the Native Women’s Resource Centre.

Recommendations

- 16 That mentorship programs between Aboriginal women experiencing financial success and those experiencing challenges be developed to assist women in building networks of support and role models as well as providing successful Aboriginal women with a community connection.
- 17 That an ‘acknowledgement award program’ honouring Aboriginal women who contribute to the community – similar to YWCA Women of Distinction Awards – be established. This could be done to highlight women who contribute in various ways – through volunteering, involvement in the education sector, health sector, or through working with youth and Elders.
- 18 That women employed in Aboriginal agencies, government and the private sector create an ‘Aboriginal Professional Women’s Association’ to represent the interests of Aboriginal women and hold activities and events.

Aboriginal Seniors and Elders

The TARP research defined both Aboriginal Elders and seniors as those who are 65 years of age and older. Elders, however, are further identified as those older (but not exclusively) members of the community that have attained ‘insight, wisdom and authority’ and who are recognized by the community as being best able to guide the young and advise them according to their knowledge, life experiences and traditions. Elders are also considered to have special gifts of cultural and spiritual knowledge and who have worked hard to earn this knowledge and are recognized for their wisdom and the community looks to them for guidance. In Toronto, Aboriginal Elders have a diversity of roles in the community as organizational board and committee members,

teachers and counsellors, spiritual practitioners, guest speakers advocates for Aboriginal cultures and languages. They often are asked to open and close meeting in a traditional manner, provide ‘talk circles’ to provide cultural teachings, teach Aboriginal language classes and conduct spiritual ceremonies. Respondents however reported these activities are not sufficient to allow for an in-depth or comprehensive passing on of the traditional culture, especially to the youth.

A key finding relating Elders and seniors in Toronto is their experience of loneliness and social isolation and their desire to have more opportunities to share their cultural knowledge with Aboriginal children youth in Toronto. They suggested that there is a pressing need to teach Aboriginal youth the value of becoming a helper to one’s family community, as someone fully grounded in the traditional teachings, ceremonies and language of their Aboriginal group. They further suggested that many of the issues faced by urban Aboriginal youth are the result of not having a strong, positive sense of self as an Aboriginal person. This is important that efforts be made to facilitate Elder and senior/youth interaction on an ongoing basis to develop a healthy Aboriginal identity in Aboriginal youth. A ‘gathering place’ designed to facilitate youth Elders and seniors conducting activities together is needed.

Like other groups in the research, Aboriginal Elders and seniors are struggling financially. They are also in need of additional services in areas such as transportation, activities programming, assisted living and palliative care. As well, Aboriginal Elders and seniors consider discrimination against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people as well as discrimination against Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people to be a significant problem in Toronto.

Recommendations

- 19 That an Aboriginal seniors long-term residential care facility be established in Toronto, modeled on the recently opened facility in Winnipeg. The facility should ensure that Elders and seniors are afforded the opportunity to interact with other generations of the Aboriginal community, especially youth. The facility should provide accommodation and services for seniors in a variety of circumstances including independent living, and enhanced care for those with different health circumstances and disabilities.

20 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that work with Aboriginal people establish programs and activities that involve Aboriginal Elders in an official capacity with appropriate financial compensation.

21 That Aboriginal organizations and non-Aboriginal organizations that work with Aboriginal youth establish programs where Elders interact with youth on an on-going basis to teach the traditional culture and language, including teaching youth to assume their role of 'Shkaabewis' (helpers) and performing ceremonies such as fasting, sweat lodges and other traditional socialization practices to provide them with a solid positive Aboriginal identity.

22 That special transportation subsidies and programs be established to facilitate Elders and seniors ability to be mobile within the city.

The Aboriginal Two-spirited Community in Toronto

Toronto is also home to a large and vibrant two-spirited Aboriginal community composed of a variety of sexual orientations including gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered people. The majority of two-spirited people in Toronto come from reserves or small rural communities to escape the homophobia and discrimination often experienced on-reserve or in small rural communities. In Toronto, while the situation is improving, homophobia, discrimination and the lack of acceptance are issues still faced by some Aboriginal two-spirited people in both the Aboriginal and mainstream communities; this is especially true for transgendered individuals. For transgendered people, there are major sections of the city outside the downtown core that are considered 'off limits' due to the high risk of violent homophobic incidents.

Many two-spirited respondents spoke of being proud of who they are, while also relaying the challenges of 'coming out' to family and friends and the fear of not being accepted. Overall, the two-spirited Aboriginal community is very diverse and contains many economically successful 'middle class' individuals as well as others who are experiencing serious problems and who are in need of various support services. HIV/AIDS and other health challenges remain a major concern in the Aboriginal, two-spirited community in Toronto.

The 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization is designed to meet the needs of HIV positive people but it is limited in its mandate space and resources. There is clearly a need for additional programs and supports, including appropriate facilities, that provide safe and supportive spaces that are culturally and gender sensitive. There is also a need for additional research to gain a more complete understanding of the experiences of two-spirited people living in Toronto.

Recommendations

23 That a safe 'transition' house be established in or near downtown Toronto where two-spirited people moving from rural communities can live during their initial adjustment to the city. It would have a mandate to help access programs and services such as housing, employment, transportation, etc. to prevent individuals from living on the street or becoming involved with the sex trade. It would also serve to connect them with Aboriginal cultural and appropriate gender activities.

24 That either through an expansion of the mandate and facilities of the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, or a new organization, a 'two-spirited gathering place' be created to serve the social, cultural and recreational needs of Aboriginal two-spirited people in Toronto. The multi-use space could be used for a variety of programs and activities such as computer access, feasts and socials, drumming, traditional teachings, youth programs, seniors' events, movie nights, kitchen facilities, etc. Its programs should be sufficiently broad to appeal to middle class two-spirited people as well as individuals experiencing problems.

25 That a 'two-spirit house' be established for HIV positive two-spirited people in or near downtown Toronto, as well as for families of two-spirited individuals experiencing health problems.

26 That the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization receive funding for an additional long-term case management worker to allow the agency more effectively meet the needs of their clients.

27 That the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization be given funding to increase its work related to two-spirited 'awareness training' for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that serve two-spirited individuals, including Elders and traditional people, with a view to facilitate sensitivity and acceptance and the increase in use of these organizations by two-spirited individuals. Further, the training should lead to the development of an effective and enforceable 'non-discrimination' policy and practices related

two-spirited people. In addition, increased supports should be made available for two-spirited students in high schools and post-secondary institutions. The awareness training should cast a wide net to a variety of organizations including First Nations Band Councils and band members.

28 That Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto make an effort to include two-spirited members on the Community councils to ensure that they are sensitive to issues of two-spirited individuals who come before them.

29 That a comprehensive research project be undertaken focusing on gaining a greater understanding of the issues and concerns of the two-spirited community including the middle class, transgendered and HIV positive individuals. The study could include an examination of the relationship between First Nations and Métis communities and the city regarding two-spirit issues.

Aboriginal Poverty and Social Services

As discussed above, a key finding of this work is that, in spite of overall improvements in education and employment levels for Aboriginal people living in Toronto and the emergence of a minority Aboriginal middle class, a significant number of community members continue to struggle with poverty and the related challenges of inadequate housing, poor health, addictions, unemployment, racism and social exclusion. The TARP research found a large proportion of Aboriginal people in Toronto who are transitioning from less stable lives (life on the streets, in shelters or in addictions treatment) and who struggle significantly with poverty and who are vulnerable and in need of a high level of social support.

Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies are working hard to meet the needs of these members of the community, to create positive social change through personal empowering, and to build a healthy urban Aboriginal community. Often, many of the people currently experiencing poverty grew up poor so breaking the cycle is particularly challenging. It is obvious that developing services to address the myriad of needs of these people to break the cycle of poverty will be difficult. A culturally-based, holistic, and well integrated and coordinated service delivery system that deals with the whole person, focusing on both short and long term change is the most effective.

Ideally, for new urban residents, the process should start before individual comes to Toronto which would entail coordination between First Nation and Métis organizations and urban agencies.

Many Aboriginal support services agency respondents spoke of challenges of meeting the needs of an increasing number of clients as a result of inadequate, short-term government funding contributions that entail extensive proposal writing, as well as reporting and evaluation requirements, which frustrate efforts to engage in long-term organizational planning. Moreover, they pointed to the fluidity and uncertainty of government policy and program funding and the need to compete with other social support agencies in accessing resources making the coordination and cooperation of services between agencies an ongoing challenge.

Recommendations

30 That Aboriginal agencies in Toronto contact their counterparts in First Nations and Métis organizations to establish a system of communications regarding individuals expressing an interest in coming to the city in order that they are aware of services offered and that initial contacts can be made when they first move to the city, thus providing them with a positive initial urban experience. Similarly, continued contact between First Nations and Métis groups and urban agencies could continue to facilitate the movement of individuals moving back and forth between the city and community of origin.

31 That Aboriginal and mainstream agencies cooperate to establish partnerships in the form of a body with a mandate to offer seamless and holistic continuation of care to Aboriginal clients. This might include a coordinated system of referral of clients, common to different agencies, to better coordinate services to individuals. Such a system could allow for the 'tracing' of an individual as they receive services at different stages of their urbanization experience.

32 That, in recognition of the frequent case that many Aboriginal clients face 'multiple problem', extra funding be allocated to Aboriginal social service agencies to meet these special circumstances.

33 That negotiations be initiated between governments and Aboriginal organizations to look for ways of reducing the onerous reporting requirements for Aboriginal agencies and examine ways to provide stable long-term core funding for Aboriginal organizations.

34 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies develop multi-organizational satellite offices as ‘one stop shops’ with a number of coordinated services and programs offered to better meet the needs of Aboriginal clients.

35 That Aboriginal organizations develop a cohesive Internet presence which provides streamlined, up-to-date, accurate information on programs and services. This will require a dedicated staff to ensure the information shared is accurate. It will also provide an outlet for those considering moving to Toronto with information to prepare them for the reality of urban life.

The Aboriginal Middle Class in Toronto

The TARP research has found that there is a growing population of economically successful, or middle class Aboriginal people in Toronto that are characterized by a stable social and economic existence including: secure housing, high levels of education and a stable family life. Unlike a significant number of Aboriginal people experiencing poverty who tend to reside in a number of low-income neighbourhoods, the Aboriginal middle class live in neighbourhoods throughout the GTA. Moreover, some are part of the ‘new wave’ of ‘ethnically mobile’ urban Aboriginal people who have recently come to identify as Aboriginal due to such factors as Bill C-31, mixed-race marriages, the rise of Métis consciousness and, more recently, because of Bill C-3.

Some members of the Aboriginal middle class are involved in the social services community as members of Boards of Directors, but many are also not involved and are instead integrated into all facets of mainstream life in Toronto. As well, the research found that a majority of the middle class wish to maintain their Aboriginal identity, practice their culture and send their children to Aboriginal schools and camps, but tend not to participate in social services oriented community activities and youth programs. Instead, many choose to attend cultural events such as powwows, National Aboriginal Day celebrations and Aboriginal arts and film festivals. A further finding from the research is that the Aboriginal middle class are experiencing varying degrees of discrimination or ‘lateral violence’ from other members of the Aboriginal community.

Although more research is needed in this area, the TARP findings are pointing to the development of a class division with the Toronto

Aboriginal population where some members of the Aboriginal middle class are not able to meet their needs for cultural participation, community inclusion, are experiencing varying degrees of discrimination and lateral violence, and are moving away from the Toronto Aboriginal social services community.

This has significant implications for the formation of a strong cohesive Aboriginal community in Toronto and the development of procedures of urban Aboriginal governance. Therefore, it is important that families and activities be developed to help the middle class to retain their culture and identity and foster their integration into the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto. The majority of respondents articulated the need for some form of cultural education centre that would serve multiple functions including act as a ‘gathering place’ where people could socialize, a facility to hold cultural and social events and ceremonies, a place to hold art and cultural exhibits, an educational resource to teach Aboriginal language and culture, a library/museum, a day care, a recreational facility for fitness and sports and a place for youth-Elders programs.

Recommendations

36 That a group of Aboriginal people convene a meeting to discuss the desirability of establishing a cultural education centre in Toronto. If there is agreement then a non-profit society should form to conduct a needs assessment to determine the specific nature of the facility. A Building Fund could be established to solicit donations from the Aboriginal community, government and the private sector. The process of fundraising and operation of the centre should be under the sponsorship of a new Aboriginal organization.

37 That Aboriginal and mainstream organizations make a special effort to attract members of the Aboriginal middle class who are currently not connected to the Toronto Aboriginal community with a view of getting them to actively participate in programs and activities.

38 That a research project be initiated to examine the specific nature of the Aboriginal middle class in Toronto with a view to more adequately understand their needs, explore ways to enhance their culture and identity in the city and determine ways to involve them more in the larger Toronto Aboriginal community.

Housing in the Toronto Aboriginal Community

The TARP research into social housing found that urban housing programs geared specifically for Aboriginal people, as well as the mainstream population have been in place for many years. However, it is clear that there is a higher demand for social housing than what is available. Aboriginal organizations such as Nishnawbe Homes, Gabriel Dumont Housing and Miziwe Biik are examples of organizations attempting to creatively respond to the demand for housing through partnerships and collaboration.

The research has demonstrated that housing provides a key foundation for the success of Aboriginal people. Without a stable housing situation, all other aspects of life remain unstable and difficult to manage. Unstable or poor housing is connected to many other factors influencing the quality of life for Aboriginal people including health, addictions and employment. Moreover, access to stable housing and having the necessary life skills to manage a household is particularly important for those Aboriginal people working to transition out of life on the streets, in shelters, from prison or from addiction rehabilitation facilities. Addressing unmet needs in Aboriginal social housing should focus on meeting the needs of Aboriginal people working to transition away from these challenges.

The research also revealed that home ownership is increasingly an interest for Aboriginal people in Toronto, and for many it has become a reality. For many others however, the prospect of home ownership remains elusive.

Recommendations

39 That Aboriginal housing organizations work with mainstream social housing organizations to develop housing policies and regulations that are culturally reflective of Aboriginal people and family structure (i.e. extended family) with a view to expanding the amount of social housing available to Aboriginal people in Toronto.

40 That a housing program be established for Aboriginal individuals transitioning from shelters or recovery treatment facilities. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing agencies should work together to create this program.

Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto

The TARP research with homeless Aboriginal people was a 'study within a study' which involved interviewing 140 homeless individuals in three focus groups, three life histories and a photovoice project with street-involved Aboriginal youth. A disproportionately large number of homeless people in Toronto are Aboriginal and are mostly men. Many are also fathers. The Aboriginal homeless tend to be between the ages of 25 and 44 and were born outside of the city with many living in Toronto for more than 10 years and who came to Toronto looking to access services, find employment, and have a 'fresh start' in life. As well, the majority of Aboriginal people who are homeless have a high school education or less and have been homeless for less than five years.

The research demonstrates that this group faces some of the most serious social problems of any Aboriginal group in Toronto, including substance abuse, poor physical and mental health, an unstable housing situation and a lack of employment. For this group meeting their most basic needs is a daily challenge. Homeless participants state that even transportation to get to services was a major problem. Many have experienced dysfunctional family lives growing up with heavy involvement with foster homes and conflicts with the law.

Substance abuse is a major problem for this group and there was near unanimous recognition for an Aboriginal addictions and detox facility in Toronto (see: Recommendation # 13). Also obtaining a form of stable housing was cited as a huge problem with long waitlists to get into social housing and frequent disqualification for being admitted because of substance abuse problems. Many were forced to reside in shelters or on the streets. Lack of qualifications for employment as a result of factors such as low levels of education and training was also frequently mentioned as an issue for homeless people.

Some Aboriginal organizations, including Na-Me-Res, Couch Fire, Anishnawbe Health, Native Child and Family Services, Native Women's Resource Centre and Miziwe Biik, were viewed as very helpful for homeless people in terms of providing shelter, food, counselling, medical services and education and training.

Recommendations

- 41** That social service agencies review their policies and regulations regarding providing assistance for transportation with a view to making it easier for clients to effectively access transportation services in Toronto.
- 42** That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies, the private sector, labour unions and educational institutions work together to create employment incentives, upgrading, apprentice and special education and training programs focusing specifically on the education and training needs of Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto. In addition that mainstream shelters in the downtown core that support Aboriginal people who face challenges with homelessness offer culturally-appropriate services and supports.
- 43** The governments establish a transitional housing program specifically geared to the needs of Aboriginal homeless people, including culturally-based services relating to addictions, counselling, cultural teachings, transportation assistance, employment preparation and life skills training.

Aboriginal Culture and Identity in Toronto

Urban Aboriginal cultures and identities in Toronto are complex, interwoven and ever-changing and are therefore very difficult to quantify and discuss with any degree of authority. Like all processes of identity formation, Aboriginal identity is negotiated with others and is related to questions of 'authenticity' and whether or not one is accepted as being part of the group and within the collective cultural boundaries. Within the urban Aboriginal community context of Toronto, Aboriginal people further negotiate multiple, inter-related identities which are based upon a diversity of markers including, race and skin colour, Indian status, social class, a connection to a First Nation community, the ability to speak an Aboriginal language, one's degree of 'ethnic mobility', one's engagement with Elders and traditional practices, and one's national/cultural affiliation, to name a few.

As well, being Aboriginal in Toronto further requires the assertion of a uniquely Aboriginal identity within a larger multicultural context that privileges a multiplicity of 'settler' identities. Ultimately, defining oneself as an Aboriginal person and participating in urban Aboriginal cultural life in a city like Toronto where individuals are involved in

numerous roles both within and outside of the urban Aboriginal community, is an ongoing and often challenging process.

Despite these complexities, the TARP research found that Aboriginal organizations in Toronto support a diversity of cultural practice the city. As such, they play a central role in urban Aboriginal cultural formations, community building and identity development. They provide a gathering space or 'meeting place'. All Aboriginal vice organizations in Toronto have some cultural element which them apart from non-Aboriginal service organizations. The range depth of cultural practices that takes place varies from organizational organization, as well as from program to program.

The research has shown us that the majority of respondents indicating being Anishnawbe, followed by Haudenosaunee, Métis and Cree. research further pointed to the importance of language in articulating cultural meaning and defining the boundaries of one's cultural difference. A TARP finding of particular concern therefore is that overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people in Toronto are unable to converse in an Aboriginal language.

And lastly, a significant majority of respondents articulated importance of Aboriginal cultural activities and a strong desire for additional cultural, recreational, and spiritual services to be provided within a Toronto Aboriginal cultural centre.

Recommendations

- 44** That Aboriginal organizations develop a program of Aboriginal 'language immersion' geared to families, similar to the Maori 'Language Nests' to attempt to keep Aboriginal languages viable in the future.
- 45** That the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto consider conducting a community wide consultation process relating to the issue of how to institute initiatives to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto, including becoming a dedicated Aboriginal cultural centre. This consultation should involve a wide range of groups such as tourism organizations, the Pan Am Games organizing committee and other cultural centres such as the proposed Thunderbird Centre in Toronto and the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg.

46 Aboriginal organizations should consider celebrating the cultural diversity that exists among Aboriginal people in Toronto by addressing the issue of the perceived dominance of Anishnawbe culture as practiced in Aboriginal organizations with a view to ensure that organizations recognize a variety of Aboriginal cultures.

47 That an Aboriginal organization take steps to acquire land outside of Toronto which will be designated an Aboriginal 'sacred space' where traditional ceremonies can be held. Transportation services would be part of the initiative.

Law and Justice and Aboriginal People

In response to long-standing patterns of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and calls for community-based reforms, the Toronto Aboriginal community has made significant advancements in the support of Aboriginal people involved with the justice system and in the creation of Aboriginal spaces of restorative justice where the community is empowered to determine the justice needs of its members.

Aboriginal people involved in the justice system in Toronto tend to be those who are younger, experiencing poverty, have less education and are experiencing a diversity of inter-related social problems including addictions, mental health challenges and social isolation. In supporting Aboriginal victims and offenders, Aboriginal law and justice programs are contributing to community development, healing, strong Aboriginal identities and cultural revitalization. In their accessing of supportive law and justice programs, they are then integrated into the Toronto Aboriginal community and in some cases exposed to Aboriginal cultural practices for the first time. Overall, these services are understood as contributing to individual healing as well as community building, the fostering of strong Aboriginal identities and the revitalization of Aboriginal culture in Toronto.

In spite of successful, community-based law and justice programming in Toronto, there continues to be challenges relating to police and security guard racial profiling of Aboriginal people, the undervaluing of Aboriginal victims and the overcharging of Aboriginal offenders. As well, the research findings identified the need for more education and awareness raising in the community on law and justice issue relating to Aboriginal people and for the creation of a community-based,

Aboriginal Duty Council to work with the existing court work. Lastly, the TARP research pointed to the need for a community-based review and evaluation of the Toronto Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit.

Recommendations

- 48** That education and awareness campaigns be initiated and include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, while focusing on police officers, security guards, lawyers, and judges. The topics of the campaigns will include:
- Anti-racism and anti-racial profiling strategies,
 - the cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people they are expressed within the mainstream justice system, and
 - the systemic basis of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and the existing reforms such as s.718.2(e), the Gladue decision and the Toronto Community Council program.
- 49** That government funding be allocated towards the expansion of Aboriginal community-based law and justice services across the GTA and that further support be given to the development of services in the area of Aboriginal youth and victims of crime.
- 50** That government funding be allocated towards the creation of an Aboriginal community-based Duty Council to represent Aboriginal people at bail hearings and to work with the existing court workers as part of an integrated legal support team.
- 51** In the interest of ensuring a degree of accountability and utility to the Aboriginal community and in order to foster improved relations with the Toronto Police Service, that there be a full, Aboriginal community-based review and evaluation of the Toronto Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit.
- 52** That a halfway house be initiated in Toronto for Aboriginal men being released from prison to assist in their readjustment to society.

Aboriginal Urban Governance

The research has revealed strong community support for the notion of urban Aboriginal, representative self-government as an elected representative political process. This support is nonetheless met with a great deal of uncertainty and apprehension regarding

steps necessary to make this a reality. Aboriginal people in Toronto are looking to have more control over all aspects of their lives and understand self-government as a way to achieve this and as a political right unique to Aboriginal people, that is recognized by the federal government and protected by the Canadian constitution. The City of Toronto has also formally committed to supporting the Aboriginal right to self-government in the city.

Presently, a number of Aboriginal social service agencies have come together in Toronto under the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) and have developed a 'community of interest' model of self-government that is representative of Aboriginal interests in the city through the services they provide, their Boards of Directors and their membership. However, the TARP research points to the need for this form of governance to move beyond the social services sector and to be more widely representative of the Aboriginal community.

The research raised a number of challenges to Aboriginal self-government in Toronto including the practical challenges of development, a lack of Aboriginal community cohesion, a lack of Canadian government recognition and inter-agency competition. Furthermore, their uncertainty was expressed over the roles that the various Aboriginal political bodies currently in place, such as First Nations, Métis groups, Provincial Territorial Organizations and Tribal Councils, would play in any urban governance initiative. Various models of urban self-government involving these political bodies have been articulated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) such as the 'host nation' model. From time to time political groups such as the Assembly of First Nations have expressed an interest in becoming involved in discussion pertaining to urban self-government.

And lastly, this research points to the need to undertake a process of education and awareness raising for Aboriginal community members in Toronto as to the many possible directions of urban self-government and for TASSC members to then engage in community-wide discussions.

Recommendations

- 53** That a broad-based group of Aboriginal organizations undertake a series of meetings to discuss the idea and feasibility of establishing Aboriginal urban self-government in Toronto.
- 54** That discussions be initiated between urban Aboriginal organizations in partnership with the three levels of government with a view to exploring the idea of Aboriginal self-government in Toronto.

Arts in the Toronto Aboriginal Community

Toronto is home to a large and vibrant Aboriginal arts scene. From theatre to music to fine art and from media to dance, there is a plethora of talented Aboriginal artists living in Toronto. Award winning playwrights, actors, authors, film makers, media producers, curators and musicians make their home in Toronto. The numerous organizations in the city including the ImagiNATIVE Film Festival, ANDPVA, Native Women in the Arts, the Centre for Indigenous Theatre, Native Earth Performing Arts, Seventh Generation Im-Makers and Red Sky Performance, among others, all make significant contributions to the Aboriginal and mainstream communities.

The TARP research revealed both the many contributions that Aboriginal arts community makes to the wider Aboriginal community in Toronto as well as the perception that these contributions are generally under-recognized. The Aboriginal arts are understood to play an important role in raising the overall visibility of Aboriginal people and establishing and maintaining an Aboriginal community presence in Toronto. Moreover, the Aboriginal arts provide unique perspectives on Aboriginal cultures, contribute to collective community understandings of cultural meaning and support healing positive Aboriginal identities.

The research also revealed that, in many cases, Aboriginal arts feel isolated and not supported by members of the larger Toronto Aboriginal community. Some arts events do not draw many patrons. As well, many of the Aboriginal patrons that do attend events tend to be from the Aboriginal middle class and some respondents suggest

that there is a disconnect between Aboriginal arts organizations and Aboriginal social service organizations. Aboriginal social service agencies can be important collaborators and partners with the Aboriginal arts and such relationships require further growth and support. And lastly, the TARP research pointed to the need for additional funding for the arts and the development of an Aboriginal arts centre.

Recommendations

- 55** That, as an attempt to better integrate Aboriginal arts with Aboriginal service delivery, efforts should be made to create collaborative opportunities for the arts to be utilized as a tool for healing and recovery. A joint committee of Aboriginal arts and social service organizations should be established to search for ways to integrate arts into social service programs. In addition, it may be appropriate to have an 'arts seat' on Board of Directors of Aboriginal social service organizations.
- 56** That Aboriginal arts organizations work as a collective to develop cohesive marketing tools to promote their programs, performances, festivals, etc. This collective marketing effort could reduce costs of individual organizations attempting to market and promote their work, as well as offer a better 'package' of Aboriginal arts for tourists as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members.
- 57** That efforts be made to secure funding for a dedicated Aboriginal arts facility to house a number of Aboriginal arts organizations and include space where artists could go and engage in multiple artistic activities including workshop space, art studios, rehearsal space, etc.
- 58** That mentorship opportunities between local Aboriginal artists and school-age youth and youth at-risk be established to foster the next generation of Aboriginal artists, musicians, actors and directors.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) is the largest and most comprehensive study of Aboriginal people in Toronto ever conducted. With a sample of over 1,400 individuals, 14 topics studied and several methodologies utilized, the TARP study provides an important picture of the current situation, aspirations and challenges facing Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).²

Aboriginal people have been living in the Toronto area for thousands of years. There is evidence that the Toronto areas was an important stopping off point along a major migration and trading route that permanent settlements have been in place for centuries. During the historical period, the area was important for fishing, hunting and served as a centre for trade.³ Through a series of informal treaties and land acquisitions, non-Aboriginal people acquired control of the land in and around what is now Toronto. It is important to recognize and acknowledge that the Toronto area is part of the traditional territory of the Mississauga of the New Credit. The inclusion of an Aboriginal person on the Coat of Arms of the City of Toronto in 1834 is a recognition of the Mississauga place in the history of the area.⁴

More recently, Aboriginal people have been moving to the GTA in significant numbers since the end of the Second World War. Toronto

² The terms City of Toronto and Greater Toronto Area (GTA) will be used interchangeably in this report.

³ For an excellent history of Aboriginal people in Toronto see: Sanderson, F. & Howard-Bobbie H. (1997). *The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto*. Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

⁴ *Ibid*, p 17.

currently has the largest Aboriginal population of any city in Ontario. The 2006 Census counted 31,910 people who identified as Aboriginal in the GTA, a 33% increase from the 2001 Census and 69,820 individuals in the GTA who had Aboriginal ancestry, an increase of 31% since 2001.⁵

Despite the long history of migration to Toronto, there has been little systematic in-depth research pertaining to Aboriginal people. Therefore, there was a sense that the time was right to undertake a major study to ascertain the nature of the Aboriginal community in Toronto. It is clear that many Aboriginal people are struggling to attain a viable economic existence and satisfactory lifestyle in the GTA. Poverty, lack of adequate housing, homelessness, unemployment and underemployment, poor health, racism, single parent families and other social and economic challenges make it difficult to establish a viable Aboriginal community in the city. At the same time, a diversity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations are in place to assist Aboriginal people experiencing problems. Their efforts have frequently had positive impacts and helped Aboriginal people overcome their challenges. In addition, there now exists a large Aboriginal middle class in the GTA composed of individuals who are economically successful and living stable lifestyles. In many cases these individuals wish to participate in, and contribute to, the formation of a vibrant Aboriginal community in Toronto; a community which sustains a strong Aboriginal identity and culture.

The situation of Aboriginal people in Toronto is complex and it is clear that there remain substantial unmet needs. Thus, there is a need for research which provides an empirical database which presents a comprehensive picture of the demographics and mobility patterns of Aboriginal people, examines specific topics pertaining to Aboriginal people, addresses the ways in which Aboriginal people define their identity and culture in the city, investigates the roles and effectiveness of Aboriginal organizations in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto, speaks to the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government for urban Aboriginal people, articulates unmet needs and makes recommendations regarding the development of

effective policies and programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Having accurate and comprehensive empirical information regarding the situation of Aboriginal people in Toronto will assist stakeholders, including personnel of Aboriginal organizations and government policy makers, make informed decisions. It is hoped that the TARP recommendations emerging from the research will result in important progress in service delivery, policy and program development and community formation that will enhance the quality of life for Aboriginal people in Toronto.

1.2 The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP)

The TARP is distinctive in that its approach to research is community-based. That is, the research is overseen from start to finish by representatives of the Toronto Aboriginal community. Specifically, the study was guided by the following principles: collaboration, community benefit and the implementation of results. Thus, the research was sponsored by the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC)⁶ and overseen by the TARP Research Steering Committee. TASSC is a non-profit organization composed of senior representatives of Aboriginal agencies whose primary activity is the delivery of services to the Aboriginal people of the GTA. The TARP Research Steering Committee was a partnership between TASSC, representative Toronto Aboriginal organizations and federal, provincial and City of Toronto government officials.

The study was initiated by TASSC (then TASSA) in October, 2008 as a result of a felt need to gain a better understanding of the circumstances of Aboriginal people in Toronto to fill a gap in our knowledge and to put forth recommendations so as to better meet their needs.

6 The Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) was formerly the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Association (TASSA).

research was seen as a follow-up to the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) which studied Aboriginal people in five cities in Ontario.⁷

The mandate of the TARP Research Steering Committee was to oversee all aspects of the research including: choosing the topics to be researched, deciding on appropriate methodologies, giving feedback and approving research instruments, approving research ethics, assisting in contacting participants to be included in the sample, sponsoring focus groups and cases studies and giving feedback and approving the Final Work Plan, Progress Reports and the Final Report. Two Co-chairs were appointed to chair the Steering Committee; Kenn Richard, Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (which was appointed as the agency which would sign the contracts with the funders on behalf of TASSC) and John Paul Restoule, Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies of Education at the University of Toronto.

The TARP Steering Committee consisted of the following members:

- Kenn Richard, Co-chair, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- Jean-Paul Restoule, Co-chair, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
- Andrea Chrisjohn, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
- Francis Sanderson, Nishnawbe Homes
- Larry Frost, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- Art Zoccole, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
- Christa Big Canoe, Kimberly Murray and Jonathan Rudin, Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto
- Harvey Manning, Na-Me-Res
- Kerry Potts, ImagINATIVE Film Festival

⁷ The Urban Aboriginal Task Force studied Aboriginal people in Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Barrie/Midland/Ontario and Kenora and was sponsored by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association. The research was conducted by the firm Mukwa Associates with Don McCaskill, Research Director and Kevin FitzMaurice, Research Associate. Copies of the six reports can be obtained at www.offic.org.

- Mae Maracle, City of Toronto
- Magda Smolewski, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
- Gavin Shaw, Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Jeff Westlake, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
- Jerren Corbiere, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
- Barbra Macgibbon, City of Toronto Homelessness Partnership Initiative
- Don McCaskill, Research Director, Mukwa Associates
- Kevin FitzMaurice, Research Associate, Mukwa Associates

The TARP process began with TASSC sponsoring a preliminary assessment conducted by Don McCaskill and Kevin FitzMaurice of firm Mukwa Associates to determine the nature of research topics should be studied. The project involved conducting 19 interviews with key informants, a mail-out survey to TARP Steering Committee members and two focus groups. These activities all involved asking participants suggest possible topics for research. A report was prepared and the TARP Steering Committee selected the following topic to research:

Table 1A: TARP Research Priorities

Demographics and mobility	Children and youth
Aboriginal women	Aboriginal men
Elders and seniors	Housing
Homelessness	Poverty, social services and Aboriginal organizations
Culture and spirituality	Urban Aboriginal governance
The emerging Aboriginal middle class	The Two-Spirit Aboriginal community
The arts	Justice and policing

The firm Mukwa Associates was contracted to conduct the study. Don McCaskill was appointed Research Director, Kevin FitzMaurice was appointed Research Associate and Jaime Cidro was appointed Research Coordinator. In addition, 12 Research Assistants were hired to conduct

out specific research tasks such as interviewing key informants, administering community surveys, facilitating and recording focus groups, assisting with the photovoice project, interviewing individuals for life histories, reviewing documents and literature and assisting with data analysis.⁸

Funding for the TARP was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) of the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and the City of Toronto Homelessness Partnership Initiative.

TASSC and the TARP Steering Committee met 19 times from November, 2008 to July, 2011 and received regular Progress Reports, updates and deliverables from the Research Director.

1.3 Research on Aboriginal People in Toronto

While there has been little systematic in-depth research pertaining to Aboriginal people in Toronto, there has been a number of studies carried out over the years. It is important to have an understanding of the findings from these studies in order to comprehend the current situation of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Throughout this report, comparisons will be made to these earlier studies to gain a historical perspective and to compare and contrast the circumstances of Aboriginal people in Toronto as reported in those studies and the findings from the TARP.

The first study of Aboriginal people in Toronto was conducted by Mark Nagler who did his fieldwork from 1964 to 1966 and published the study in 1970.⁹ He interviewed 150 Aboriginal people focusing on topics such as motives for moving to the city, cultural influences, educational levels, employment experiences and patterns of social adjustment. The major findings of the research included:

- Economic reasons (the desire to find employment and the lack of opportunities on reserves) were the most factors for coming to Toronto,

followed by the desire to obtain an education, for medical reasons (accessing better health care), negative factors on reserves, for family reasons, the positive picture of urban living presented by the media and meet short-term goals (obtain supplies and seasonal employment).

- Aboriginal levels of education are well below those of non-Aboriginal people living in Toronto but higher levels than on reserves.
- Aboriginal people who have higher levels of education and higher paying jobs tend to be longer term urban residents of Toronto or are from Aboriginal communities located close to urban centres.
- Aboriginal people tend to be residentially scattered through the Toronto area as opposed to concentrated in specific neighbourhoods.
- There is a strong pattern of Aboriginal people in Toronto retaining strong ties to their community of origin which often serves as the social and cultural centre of individual's lives.
- There is little formation of a common group identity or sense of community in the city making it difficult to formulate group goals of the evolution and acknowledged Aboriginal leadership.
- There is an Aboriginal urban population that has lived in Toronto for many years and exhibit a stable economic existence in both white and blue collar jobs.
- The Native Canadian Centre is an important focal point for many Aboriginal people who are visiting, relocating or residing in the city.
- There are three 'categories' of Aboriginal people in Toronto including a small *white collar* group of professionals, a larger *blue collar* group who tend to associate closely with other Aboriginal people in the city, and a *transitional* group made up of individuals who have recently come to Toronto with the view to settle permanently (students, seasonal workers who intend to stay for a short time and those who frequently move back and forth between the reserve and city).

The second major study of Aboriginal people in Toronto was *Indians in the City Project* sponsored by the Union of Ontario Indians under the direction of H. A. McCue and published by Don McCauley in 1981.¹⁰ The study involved interviewing a sample of 422 Aboriginal people in Toronto on a variety of topics including migration patterns, household composition, social and cultural activities, adjustment

8 See Appendix A for a complete list of the research team.

9 Nagler, M. (1970). *Indians in the City: A Study of the Urbanization of Indians in Toronto*. Ottawa: Canadian Resource Centre for Anthropology, St. Paul University.

10 McCaskill, D. (1981). *The Urbanization of Canadian Indians in Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver: A Comparative Analysis*. Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, Department of Sociology, York University. Also published in: Culture 1(1), 1981.

experiences, housing, employment, education and organizational participation. The findings from the study included:

- The majority of respondents had come to Toronto (43%) to find employment followed by to further their education (20%) and moving with their families (12%).
- There is a substantial group of Aboriginal people who have resided in Toronto for some time with 32% living there for 10 years or more.
- A large percentage of respondents (82%) maintained some degree of ties to their community of origin with 22% visiting 'often', 60% 'sometimes' and 14% 'never'. The most frequently mentioned reason was to visit friends or relatives.
- Aboriginal households were somewhat large with a substantial number of children. Over 62% of the households had members 19 years and under.
- There was a high rate of mixed marriages in Toronto. Over half of the sample had brothers or sisters married to non-Aboriginal people.
- The educational levels of respondents were low with 80% having completed Grade 10 or less and only 3% having attained some post-secondary education.
- A large percentage of respondents were unemployed (47%) or employed part-time (10%) and only 37% had worked steadily throughout their stay in Toronto. On the other hand, 33% were employed in skilled occupations such as skilled trades, clerical positions (often with Aboriginal organization) and businesses.
- Both kinship and friendship networks as well as Aboriginal agencies assisted the majority of respondents with their adjustment to the city. Forty-eight percent (48%) had received assistance when they arrived in Toronto usually in the form of financial help in finding a job. The importance of kinship networks grew with time spent in the city with 87% of respondents mentioning they had relatives in the city.
- There was a fair degree of residential segregation in the poorer areas of Toronto (61% overall e.g. 33% in Cabbagetown and 17% in Parkdale) with high rates of intra-community mobility within these areas.
- Respondents exhibited low rates of institutional participation in either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal organizations with only 20% belonging to any organization.
- More individuals reported liking their neighbourhood (30%) compared to those (21%) who disliked it.
- A significant number of respondents could, with some degree of fluency, speak an Aboriginal language (60%), primarily Anishnawbe.

An important study of Aboriginal people in 22 urban centres in Ontario (including Toronto) was the Urban Aboriginal Task Force which published the report, *Native People in Urban Settings* in 1981. The research project was a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and provincial government ministries. It had as its goal "... improvement of the quality of life of Native people migrating and residing in urban areas".¹¹ The project was important for two reasons. First, it was the first major study which utilized a participatory or community-based approach to research which involved the Aboriginal community in a decision-making role in all aspects of the project. Second, the report had a major impact in the development of programs and services for Aboriginal people living in urban centres in Ontario. The Task Force resulted in a heightened awareness of issues facing urban Aboriginal people, the growth of significant government financial resources devoted to urban Aboriginal peoples and, in part, to the increased number of Aboriginal organizations to deal with those issues. For example, in 1981 there were only nine Aboriginal organizations in Toronto. Today there are over 30.¹²

The Task Force research was also innovative in that it used *triangulation*. That is, a number of methodologies focused on a research topic. Thus, the Task Force used a number of methodologies including a literature review, key informant interviews with Aboriginal agency staff (n=489), community meetings (n=25) and a demographic survey of members of the urban Aboriginal community in 22 cities and towns across Ontario (n=392).

Some of the major findings of the Task Force were:

- Aboriginal people in cities and towns in Ontario face serious problems including high rates of unemployment, low levels of education, lack of affordable housing, discrimination, loss of Aboriginal culture and identity and alcohol abuse.
- Specific needs were identified, particularly in the areas of the justice system, social welfare, health and nutrition, housing, recreation and special needs of Aboriginal children, youth, families and women.

11 Maiman, F., & Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting. (1981). *Native people in urban settings: Problems, needs, and services*. Toronto: Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting.

12 Richardson, D., Dimaline, C. & Blondin, F. (2002). *In the Spirit of Unity: A Synopsis of program Services Available to the Urban Aboriginal Population in the Greater Area*.

- Experiences with racism and discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, the justice system and social services were a significant problem.
- There were significant gaps in services, especially in the areas of enhancement of awareness for Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people, prevention programs, crisis intervention and counselling, education and training opportunities, day care, increased levels of Aboriginal staff in service organizations, housing, employment opportunities, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and resources for Aboriginal seniors.

The Task Force made a number of recommendations to address these issues, the most important being the development of specialized Aboriginal organizations and programs to more effectively meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people. Other strategies suggested by the Task Force included more inter-agency cooperation and coordination of services, increased government funding, development of social and cultural facilities to strengthen Aboriginal identity, pre-migration orientation, diet and nutrition workshops, establishment of sports and recreational programs and facilities for Aboriginal youth as well as youth councils, education and training programs, involvement of Elders in teaching Aboriginal history, culture and language and programs to address discrimination.¹³

The next major study relating to urban Aboriginal people was the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which sponsored several research projects in urban areas across Canada, including Toronto, and contained a chapter on urban Aboriginal people in Volume 4.¹⁴ Throughout the 1990s, there were a few studies pertaining to special topics relating to Aboriginal people in Toronto. For example, a study of Aboriginal women in Toronto conducted by Allison Williams in 1997 discovered that a large percentage of Aboriginal women, particularly lone-parent women, live in the poorest core areas of Toronto and suffer from problems of limited education, unemployment and discrimination. She concludes, "The urbanization of Aboriginal lone-parents continues to be a factor in the feminization of poverty in

Toronto"¹⁵ and recommends the establishment of Aboriginal-specific services in the core of the city, particularly for Aboriginal female lone-parents as well as additional research.

In the late 1990s, an important initiative was established by the government of Canada in recognition of the pressing need to better serve Aboriginal people in Canada's urban areas and to more effectively coordinate the activities of the various levels of government. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) of the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, now under Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, mandate is to address socio-economic needs, coordinate and improve access to programs and services, raise awareness of urban Aboriginal people, coordinate policy research, knowledge and information and improve linkages and policy integration within the federal government and municipal governments, Aboriginal groups and the private sector.¹⁶ Several pilot projects were funded under the strategy (including in Toronto).

The UAS sponsored two reports to assist in its work. The first, *Moving Toward Unity: A Community Plan for the Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy*, suggested the need to develop community demonstration projects to build capacity for existing community agencies, develop culture-based strategies of service delivery, institute local leadership programs and cultivate partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service agencies.¹⁷ The second study was a community consultation process undertaken under the sponsorship of the Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Demonstrations Project Interim Management Committee in 2004 in order to ascertain the Aboriginal community views regarding its needs and to articulate their ideas as to appropriate priorities for the UAS.

The process involved holding eight meetings involving 180 community representatives focusing on specific themes. A report entitled

13 Maidman, F., & Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting. (1981). *Native people in urban settings: Problems, needs, and services*. Toronto: Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting, p. 86-91.

14 RCAP (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). (1996). Volume 4: *Perspectives and Realities*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

15 Williams, A. (1997). Urban Aboriginals: A Focus on Aboriginal Women in Toronto. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, XVII, 1, 75-101.

16 Marlene Finn and Associates. (2004). *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation: Final Report*.

17 Anderson, D. (2003). *Moving Toward Unity: A Community Plan for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy*.

All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation: Final Report resulted from the community meetings. The articulated priorities included:

- Arts, culture and media: a multidisciplinary arts centre, more visible presence for Aboriginal arts and media and affordable housing for artists.
- Business: establishing an economic development corporation to lever funding for businesses, a business networking association and an Aboriginal business directory.
- Youth: social and recreational facility for sports and cultural programming, financial assistance, entrepreneurship training and mentorship for business start-up and telecommunication dedicated to Aboriginal youth.
- Education: Aboriginal culture, language and identity reflected in the school system, placements for students, positive role models and mentors and better access to post-secondary education.
- Employment and training: continuing support of agencies delivering employment and training, an economic development corporation, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training and positive role models.
- Health: addictions services and aftercare, more training of health care professionals, recognition of traditional healers and illness prevention programs.
- Housing and Homelessness: affordable housing, continued support programs for the homelessness, creative partnerships with builders and more community communication.
- Justice: more alternatives to the mainstream justice system, support for Aboriginal self-determination and cultural perspectives and more Aboriginal participation in the justice system.
- Seniors, elders and disabled: a nursing care facility with assistive devices and medical care, more social and recreational programs, better access to transportation and access to nutritious meals.

The recognition that more attention needs to be paid to issues facing Aboriginal people in Toronto led to a number of specialized studies in the last decade. For example, in 2002 a study entitled *In the Spirit of Unity: A Synopsis of Programs and Services Available to the Urban Aboriginal Population in the Greater Toronto Area* was undertaken. Its purpose was to document existing programs and services for Aboriginal people in Toronto and to identify gaps in services and make recommendations

for improving the lives of Aboriginal people in Toronto.¹⁸ The study conducted 25 interviews with staff and board members of Aboriginal agencies as well as 25 interviews with community members. It conducted three focus groups and analyzed the data from 161 surveys. The report compiled a comprehensive list of programs and services available to Toronto's Aboriginal population. Some of the conclusions and recommendations of the report include:

- There is an overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in correctional institutions and a lack of post-release services such as Aboriginal halfway houses to assist offenders.
- Aboriginal organizations often lack stable long-term funding such as core funding for administration to maintain their organizations and deliver their services.
- There is a lack of coordination between the three levels of government regarding jurisdiction and provision of funding for urban Aboriginal people and therefore more integration and higher levels of funding are required.
- There are few transitional programs, especially housing, for individuals who leave the streets and who require treatment for addiction.
- Because of the high levels of poverty in the Toronto Aboriginal community, fundraising activities are not feasible.
- Mental health was articulated as an issue for some Aboriginal people and there are few services available to assist them.
- Similarly, there are few programs and services geared toward disabled urban Aboriginal people despite high levels of disability.
- With the closure of Pedahbun Lodge there is a gap in services for individuals who require treatment for addictions because of substance abuse.
- There is fragmentation in the Aboriginal community in Toronto at the agency and individual level and therefore, a mechanism should be established to allow individuals and organizations to work out their differences in a positive way.
- The vestiges of colonialism have contributed to a sense of powerlessness among Aboriginal peoples and thus there needs to be mechanisms put in place to facilitate some form of nation-to-nation relationship.
- Urban Aboriginal agencies have often emerged as the representatives of the community by default sometimes resulting in fragmentation of the

18 Richardson, D., Dimaline, C. & Blondin, F. (2002). *In the Spirit of Unity: A Synopsis of Programs and Services Available to the Urban Aboriginal Population in the Greater Area*.

community. A larger more representative body is therefore needed to be more representative of the Aboriginal community.

- There is a need to increase inter-agency coordination (such as the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Association) and for effective communication tools (such as Aboriginal radio) to be developed to more adequately inform the Toronto Aboriginal community of events, activities and programs.
- There needs to be high quality education and training programs put in place to train Aboriginal agency staff in technical and professional skills, such as policy development, planning, administration skills, programming, public relations and fundraising. This could lead to increased professionalism, accreditation and high standards of service.

In 2004, a research team of five faculty members from the University of Toronto carried out the initial stages of a study entitled the *Minobimaatisiwin Project* which was designed to examine the concept of Indigenous knowledge in the urban context.¹⁹ The project held discussions with 14 Aboriginal organizations in Toronto focusing on the themes of linking Indigenous knowledge with sustainability, identity, nationhood and language. Some of the findings from the preliminary discussions included:

- Sustainability is bound up with the issue of accessibility related to affordable housing, food, health care, educational and employment opportunities, social networks, a strong economic foundation, language training, cultural workshops, cultural gatherings and the development of facilities and infrastructures.
- Identity issues involve the development of healthy individuals with an understanding of Aboriginal history, languages and communities through education as well as maintaining healthy relationships collectively through a greater understanding of Aboriginal people by mainstream society and self-representation through political and economic well-being.
- Nationhood, in the sense of a support system, is complex in an urban context because of such factors as land and treaty relationships often define nationhood, ties that urban Aboriginal people have to the home communities, the presence of several nations with different cultures, languages and traditions in the city and the fact that Aboriginal people are dispersed throughout the city. The development of a collective political body in the urban context implies the dilemma of respecting distinct

cultural identities as well as the development of a 'pan-Aboriginal' collective voice to protect and sustain nationhood for the urban Aboriginal individual.

- Aboriginal language retention through language programs is essential as language carries the worldview of the people. Also, language programs and the mainstream education system are important.

In 2004, a study of mixed-race Native people in Toronto by Bonita Lawrence was published as a book entitled "*Real! Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*."²⁰ The author interviewed 29 mixed-blood (mostly Aboriginal-white) ancestors. Aboriginal people (21 female and 8 male) regarding such topics and reasons for leaving their communities, their relationship with the community of origin, community activism, Indigenous sovereignty and colonialism within the context of how mixed-blood urban Native people understand and negotiate their own identities in relation to community and how external definitions on Indianness have impacted their identities. Some of the conclusions of the study are:

- That urban mixed-blood Native identity cannot be adequately understood except as shaped by a legacy of genocide, state legislation and colonialism which have produced a number of categories of Indianness.
- There is a significant loss of relationship with communities of origin among mixed-blood Native people.
- That factors such as state-organized policies, colonialism and other forms of violence led to families leaving their home communities often leading to a sense of homelessness, loss and alienation.
- A number of factors have contributed to the articulation of urban mixed-blood Native identity including the expansion of the category of Native to include them as a result of the growing number of mixed marriages in urban contexts, the refiguring of categories of Indianness under Bill C-31 and a conscious attempt to reject colonial divisions among native people.
- Despite the challenges of often being 'invisible' in the urban centre, pressures to assimilate, racism and being disowned by First Nation leadership, mixed-blood Native people in Toronto are resilient and have pride in their heritage and are finding new ways to express Aboriginal identities as urban people.

19 Carter, J. & McGregor, D. (2006). *First Steps Toward the Development of Community-driven Research Strategies and Priorities for Indigenous Knowledge in Toronto: A Progress Report on the Minobimaatisiwin Project*.

20 Lawrence, Bonita (2004). "*Real! Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native People and Indigenous Nationhood*, University of Nebraska Press.

- Often the bonds of identity such as Aboriginal language, band, territory or clan are no longer salient for urban mixed-blood Native people. The most important source of grounding of identity is the family.
- Having some amount of 'Indian blood' was seen as a necessary prerequisite for an individual to be considered Native.
- Native traditions and spirituality plays a significant role as a glue in enabling people to develop or maintain an Aboriginal identity in Toronto although access to the land is often restricted for urban Aboriginal people.
- There is a substantial Aboriginal middle class in Toronto which includes mixed-blood Native people but there is little institutional support for this group where Native identity can be nurtured and freely expressed.
- There is a need to link urban First Nation and First Nations people residing on reserve in a process of reconceptualising Indigenous nationhood and identity such as new confederacies, affiliations and enhanced forms of governance which supersede existing dominant society categories.

In 2008, a study of urban Aboriginal men living in Toronto authored by Jean-Paul Restoule was published.²¹ It used two circles involving seven Aboriginal men to learn about male Aboriginal identity formation in urban areas. Some of the findings of the study were:

- All of the men maintained an Aboriginal identity and there was a sense of pan-Indian adoptions of culture.
- Aboriginal identity continue to survive, passed on from generation to generation, even in the absence of sustained contact with ancestral communities through cultural values which are engrained in the families and are passed down and absorbed implicitly.
- Aboriginal identity was expressed through values and activities even though there was little contact with communities of origin and paradoxically, even if their parents were silent about their Aboriginal roots.
- The younger generation, raised in Toronto and having attained improved education and economic security, is more comfortable identifying as Aboriginal and struggles less with shame than their parents.
- Values such as ingenuity, honesty, respect, hard work, ability to adapt, autonomy and acceptance of multiple views were passed down by parents and were seen as important expressions of Aboriginal culture.

21 Restoule, Jean-Paul. *The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation of the Urban Raised Generation*, Canadian Journal of Native Education, 2008, 31,2.

No topics pertaining to Aboriginal people in Toronto have received more attention than housing and homelessness. From 1999 to 2007, seven reports have been written on these subjects. The first, in 1999, was the Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force's report, *Talking Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*²² (the Golden Report). It contained a chapter on Aboriginal people based on a commissioned study by Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting.²³ The latter study interviewed 22 individuals from Aboriginal homeless-related agencies, 14 people from non-Aboriginal homeless agencies and 17 homeless individuals.

The Golden Report made nine recommendations regarding Aboriginal homelessness (based largely on the Obonsawin-Irwin Report) including:

- Establish a new shelter for homeless Aboriginal people.
- The federal government should carry responsibility for funding housing homeless Aboriginal people in partnership with the provincial government.
- A housing pilot project should be established in suburban Toronto for Aboriginal people operated by an Aboriginal agency.
- The Li'l Beavers program should be reinstated and funded by the provincial government.
- The federal government should establish an urban multi-purpose Aboriginal youth centre in Toronto in cooperation with Aboriginal agencies.
- That an Aboriginal Steering Committee be established to provide advice on Aboriginal homelessness.
- An Aboriginal clinical detox centre should be established.
- A rural healing lodge near Toronto should be instituted.
- That training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth based on a transitional housing model be established.
- Expand the Biindgd Breakfast Club model.

The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto undertook a study which resulted in a report entitled *Struggling for success: Aboriginal Family Units and the Effects of Poverty in the Greater Toronto Area*²⁴

22 Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. (1999). *Talking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*.

23 Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1993). *The Emergence of Aboriginal Institutions in Metropolitan Toronto*. Brantford: Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

24 Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, *Struggling for Success: Aboriginal Family Units and the Effects of Poverty in the Greater Toronto Area*.

2006. It utilized a survey of clients, visitors and associates of the Centre (sample size not listed). The study discovered four key issues facing Aboriginal families: violence and abuse, historic issues, poverty and homelessness and poor health including substance abuse and lack of parenting skills.

In 2008, the firm Jim Ward Associates was commissioned by member agencies of TASSC to develop a strategy by which the City of Toronto's Homelessness Partnership Initiatives Program could be effectively invested to address the issue of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto. The final report was entitled *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto*.²⁵ The study interviewed 17 senior management staff from TASSC agencies, conducted focus groups with 42 staff members from two TASSC organizations and 53 homeless clients. The suggested solutions to the challenges of Aboriginal homelessness included:

- More transitional housing programs with ongoing supports.
- Closer partnerships between Aboriginal agencies and colleges and universities to facilitate increased education and training programs.
- Providing services within a traditional Aboriginal environment.
- Building capacity within organizations serving Aboriginal people.
- Establishing an Aboriginal addictions management program.
- Programs to raise the awareness of citizens of Toronto of the importance of Aboriginal people in Canadian history.
- Increased advocacy for Aboriginal people at the political decision-making levels in Toronto.

In 2008, an Aboriginal housing consultation study was undertaken by several Toronto Aboriginal organizations with the goal of identifying housing needs and priorities and recommending a funding mechanism to allocate the \$20 million that had been allocated to Toronto to build affordable housing by the federal government.²⁶ The project began with a GTA Aboriginal Housing Summit and proceeded to hold 12 community forums involving 450 participants, an online survey with

a sample of 236 and interviews with 19 executive directors and board members of organizations and senior government officials. The study concluded that Aboriginal housing should be under Aboriginal control of Aboriginal organizations and administered under the principle of proper accountability, full transparency and administrative efficiency. The report also set out a critical path and timeline from the allocation of the funds through to assessment and evaluation. As a result of the organizations' efforts, Miziwe Biik Development Corporation given responsibility for administering the housing funds.

In 2009, a study of street youth in Toronto was conducted entitled *Street Youth in Toronto, Canada: An Investigation of Demographic Predictors of HIV Status Among Street Youth Who Access Preventive Health and Social Services*.²⁷ Twelve Aboriginal youth were included in the study which constituted 8.7% of their sample (total sample n=140). The study employed a structured self-administered questionnaire and asked questions regarding demographic and behavioural characteristics as well as their HIV status. Some of the results of the study were:

- The majority of the total respondents earned less than \$15,000 annually (71%), had less than high school education (50.7%) and had been street involved for more than one year (72.4%).
- Aboriginal youth tended to have significantly higher HIV seroconversion rates than non-Aboriginal youth, including in the study sample.
- Factors that might contribute to the higher rates of HIV among Aboriginal street youth include cultural beliefs that forbid open discussion of sex and drug use, sexual behaviours and drug use that may be stigmatized and deemed culturally inappropriate and establishing helping relationships may be difficult for Aboriginal youth (including housing, employment and physical and mental health facilities).
- Older street youth tend to have higher HIV rates than younger street youth.
- Given the higher rates of HIV among Aboriginal street youth, the study recommends that special culturally-based programs be established to address Aboriginal youth.

Another major study of Aboriginal people in Toronto was the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* a national research project of Aboriginal

25 Jim Ward Associates. (2008). *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto*. Toronto: Toronto: Jim Ward Associates.

26 Nishawbe Homes, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report*.

27 Anthony Linton, Mina Singh, David Turbow and Timothy Legg. *Street Youth in Toronto, Canada: An Investigation of Demographic Predictors of HIV Status Among Street Youth Who Access Preventive Health and Social Services*, Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services, 8:2:2009.

people in 11 Canadian cities (including Toronto) conducted by the Environics Institute published in 2010.²⁸ It is an opinion research project which focused on the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit living in Canada's major urban centres. In each, city interviews were conducted with about 250 Aboriginal respondents as well as telephone interviews with non-Aboriginal people to ascertain their views regarding Aboriginal people and an online survey of current and past National Achievement Foundations scholars. A Toronto-specific report was also published.²⁹ Some of the main findings from the Environics Toronto study that are relevant to this study are:

- Aboriginal people move to Toronto primarily for work opportunities but also for education and family and the amenities and services available.
- Respondents felt that Toronto was their home but also maintain close links with their community of origin, even if they have lived in the city for several years.
- There is strong Indigenous pride among Aboriginal people in Toronto.
- Half of respondents reported that Aboriginal cultural activities are widely available in the city and they participate in those activities. Also, a large percentage suggested that Aboriginal culture has become stronger in Toronto in recent years.
- Aboriginal customs/traditions, ceremonies, spirituality and language were viewed as the most important aspects of culture.
- Respondents were evenly split regarding being concerned about the loss of cultural identity in the city.
- A large percentage of respondents said that they feel a greater sense of belonging to a mostly non-Aboriginal community than to a mostly Aboriginal community. At the same time, the majority expressed a strong connection to other Aboriginal people in the city.
- Aboriginal people reported that they are as likely to have many close non-Aboriginal as Aboriginal friends, especially the youth.
- There was a common perception among respondents that Aboriginal people are often treated unfairly in the city and are viewed negatively by non-Aboriginal people although the majority feel accepted by non-Aboriginal people.

- Aboriginal Torontonians use and value Aboriginal organizations, particularly those with lower incomes, and these organizations serve to provide the community with a sense of shared community and values.
- Aboriginal people tend to use Aboriginal organizations because of the positive environment including the connection to Aboriginal culture as well as their specific resources such as social services, health supports and educational services.
- Family and friends as well as Aboriginal services such as friendship and healing centres are the most important components of Aboriginal people's sense of community in Toronto.
- Aboriginal people like living in Toronto in part because of the quality of life including availability of amenities, the nature of the city with its cultural and artistic events and the high level of acceptance they feel.
- The most frequent reasons for the choice of neighbourhood include affordable housing, safe environment and proximity to amenities, transportation, work and school.
- Respondents report that raising a healthy family, living a balanced lifestyle being close to family and friends, having strong connections to their Aboriginal identity and background and having a good job are the most important aspects in defining a successful life.
- A majority of respondents suggest that traditional Aboriginal healing practices are important to them.
- A large percentage of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study respondents express little confidence in the Canadian justice system and favour creating a separate Aboriginal justice system.

The most recent study of Aboriginal people in Toronto was published in 2011 by Native Child and Family Services of Toronto and focused on providing services to Aboriginal children.³⁰ The study involved a number of consultations or discussions in groups and with individuals, including parents, caregivers, service providers and Elders as well as a community survey. The focus of the research centred on the needs for services that are inclusive to all Aboriginal communities and additional worldviews represented in Toronto. Some of the findings and recommendations of the study include:

- That the western part of Toronto contains the largest number of Aboriginal people but has the least amount of access to Aboriginal services and, therefore, children and family services need to be established in these areas.

²⁸ Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Ottawa: Environics.
²⁹ Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Toronto Report*. Ottawa: Environics.

³⁰ Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, *Little Voices Child and Family Centres: A Framework for the Delivery of Native Children's Services in the City of Toronto, 2011*.

- That any programs for children and families must be based on the kinship system and Aboriginal cultures (for example, using the Medicine Wheel), including the numerous Aboriginal cultures present in Toronto.
- That Aboriginal 'lodges' or 'hubs' be established to deliver a holistic and integrated set of services for children and families.
- That the City of Toronto incorporate specific questions related to Aboriginal families to identify them in the system, give priority to Aboriginal families in terms of access to services, build the cost of transportation into programs related to Aboriginal children and families and establish a demonstration project to develop 'best practices'.

The review of the research pertaining to Aboriginal people living in Toronto over the years reveals several important themes and lessons for the current TARP study. In the beginning, the studies tended to be *pure* or *curiosity* research (Nagler, 1970 and McCaskill, 1972) in that they were attempting to gain a general understanding of the relatively new phenomenon of Aboriginal urbanization with little attempt to make recommendations for policy or program change.

The *Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Settings* study in 1981 shifted the nature of the research enterprise by combining *pure* research with *needs assessment* and *advocacy* research. That is, in addition to studying Aboriginal peoples' general urban experiences, it also delineated a number of unmet needs facing Aboriginal people in their urban adjustment and put forth a series of recommendations as to how to meet those needs. An important goal of *advocacy* research is to bring about change in terms of bringing resources to bear to meet particular needs demonstrated by the research and solving articulated problems. The Task Force also introduced two distinct methodological approaches to the study of urban Aboriginal people – *triangulation* (the use of multiple methods to study a particular social phenomenon) and *community-based research* (in which representatives of the Aboriginal community have a decision-making role in overseeing the research).

Most of the subsequent research of Aboriginal people in Toronto (Williams, 1997, Obonsawin-Irwin, 1998, Richardson, 2002, Anderson, 2003, Finn, 2004, Carter, 2006, Native Women's Resource Centre, 2006, Ward, Nishnawbe Homes, 2008, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, 2011) continued to utilize an *advocacy* research

approach to attempt to uncover unmet needs and recommend actions to address them. This approach to research, often referred to as *applied* or *deficit* research, tends to concentrate on particular social and economic problems encountered by Aboriginal people. The studies were frequently effective in their goal of focusing attention on particular issues and facilitating additional resources to develop programs that meet the articulated needs. At the same time, there was little attempt to move beyond the specific issue being studied and contribute to a more general understanding of the overall situation of Aboriginal people living in Toronto. An additional methodological limitation of the studies was the nature and size of the sample of respondents. Little attempt was made to create a random sample of the general Aboriginal population in Toronto. Rather, the samples tended to be composed of Aboriginal stakeholders, often representatives of Aboriginal organizations, who had knowledge and expertise in the particular issue being studied. Further, the sample size in all the studies was too small to make significant generalizations about the larger population.

A few studies, including Lawrence (2004), Restoule (2008) and Environics study (2010), returned to the earlier *curiosity* approach to research in that they utilized interviews with Aboriginal people regarding a number of topics enquiring about their values, experiences, identities and aspirations.

The strength of the Environics study was that it provided a national perspective comparing the situation of Aboriginal people in 11 cities across Canada. A limitation of the study when attempting to understand Aboriginal people in individual cities is that the sample is too small to allow for significant generalizations about the general population. In addition, the Environics study tended to utilize a *quantitative* method regarding the research focusing on statistical analysing data to draw conclusions with some attention to quotations resulting from the interviews. There was very little attention paid to using *qualitative* methodologies in the study.

The TARP study attempted to learn from the previous studies and integrate aspects of them into its design in a number of ways. First, TARP, like the Task Force, took a *community-based research* approach

in which representatives of the Aboriginal community of Toronto (through TASSC) along with other Aboriginal organizations and partner government officials oversaw all aspects of the study. Second, it examined a wide variety of topics in order to paint a picture of many aspects, including a balance of both positive and negative aspects of the life of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Third, the study included a large enough sample to be confident that the generalizations and conclusions, to a large degree, are an accurate representation of the general population of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Fourth, the study utilized both *quantitative* and *qualitative* methodologies to gain a more complete representation of the Aboriginal community.³¹ Finally, the study took an *applied* approach in that it will make recommendations that hopefully lead to positive changes in the formation of policy, service delivery, facilities and programming that will positively contribute to the quality of life of Aboriginal people living in Toronto.

1.4 Users Guide to this Report

This report aims to provide a wide variety of audiences a picture of aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people in Toronto. It is hoped that it will be useful to many stakeholders including policy makers, agencies and their officials who administer and deliver policies or programs and, perhaps most importantly, the beneficiaries of the programs. The report is written in plain language, attempting to avoid the use of academic jargon and therefore is designed to be useful as a source of information for the general public. Moreover, the considerable amount of data emerging from the study will be a resource for students and other researchers interested in the topic.

This report is organized around the specific topics researched as set out by the TARP Steering Committee. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the TARP and describe its research methodology. Chapter 3 introduces the subjects of the study by providing an analysis of demographics and mobility. Chapters 4 to 16 present the study findings in detail pertaining to topic such as Aboriginal children and youth, men, women, Elders and seniors, the two-spirited community, poverty and social

services, the Aboriginal middle class, housing, homelessness, culture and identity, law and justice, Aboriginal urban governance and the like. Chapter 17 is devoted to an analysis of the findings, drawing conclusions and making recommendations as to how to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto.

Each chapter begins with a summary of the main points and presents the findings of the research in the form of charts, graphs and tables of the quantitative data (community surveys and key informant interviews) which are complemented by the qualitative data (focus group life histories and case studies) presented in the form of quotations from research participants. Key informant interview data contain both open and closed-ended questions and is therefore included in both tabular form and in quotations. Statistics Canada data is used for comparative purposes. In addition, the current TARP findings are compared to data from other studies to gain a more complete picture. Finally, each chapter ends with a discussion of conclusions drawn for the findings.



31 See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of the research methodology used in the TARP study.

TARP METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

2.1 Research Methodology: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Research is about gaining an understanding, or explaining, a social phenomenon; in the case of TARP, the situation of Aboriginal people in Toronto. A central task of research, therefore, is to accurately represent and draw conclusions based on empirical evidence about the topics that are studied in as credible and defensible way as possible. Good research must meet the standards of validity (the degree to which the findings accurately represent the social phenomenon and can be generalized to the larger population being sampled) and reliability (the degree to which the study can be replicated by other studies which result in similar findings). The research methods are critical to the success of the study.

Research methodology is a set of procedures that are based on systematic observation and logical rules for drawing inferences from observations. There are a variety of methods that can be used in a study, each having different strengths and weaknesses. One way to divide different research methods is to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches.³² While both approaches focus on evidence-based research, quantitative methods make the assumption

that individuals or groups tend to act in certain patterned ways which generalizations (going from the particular to the whole) can be made based on empirical evidence.³³ It tends to be characterized by objectivity (unbiased and value free) of the researcher, measurement through standardized instruments (e.g. questionnaires and structured interviews), large samples representing the population being studied, the quantification and statistical analysis of data and causal inferences about the findings.

Qualitative approaches, on the other hand, attempt to capture the perceptions of participants ‘from the inside’ through interpreting actions in terms of meanings people bring to them. Rather than looking for patterns of behaviour and generalizations from a group, qualitative approaches focus on individual cases. There is an attempt to gain a ‘holistic’ overview of the context in a naturalistic setting, believing that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable. Qualitative approaches acquire an in-depth understanding of social phenomenon. Qualitative researchers use approaches such as ethnography, observation, open-ended interviews, case studies, life histories, focus groups, historical narratives and photographic analysis.

It should be emphasized that both approaches are valid research methods, each with their own strengths and limitations. Quantitative methods allow for a breadth of understanding from a large number of respondents whereas qualitative approaches gain a more in-depth appreciation of the topics under study. The methodologies can be complementary. Indeed, many studies utilize triangulation or a combination of approaches to gain a more complete understanding of the subject. This is the approach taken by the TARP study. Quantitative methods (survey questionnaire and structured interviews) are used in combination with qualitative methods (focus groups, life history case studies and photovoice) to gain a broad-based in-depth understanding of the situation of Aboriginal people residing in Toronto.

32 It should be noted that a new approach to research is evolving based on Indigenous ontology (a group's understanding of the nature of reality, being or existence), *epistemology* (a group's understanding of the nature of knowledge or truth) and *methodology* (ways of undertaking research). See for example: Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, London and Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Indigenous methodologies tend to be associated with qualitative approaches to research.

33 Quantitative approaches such as survey questionnaires and structured interviews were the primary methodology utilized by the studies of Aboriginal people in Toronto reviewed in Chapter 1.

2.2 TARP Research Design: A Community-Based Approach

From the very beginning, TARP was committed to a community-based approach to research. This approach is similar to a participatory action or applied research approach. There are two fundamental characteristics of community-based approach. First, it involves Aboriginal community representatives assuming key decision-making roles in overseeing all aspects of the research. Second, the research is designed to be useful. That is, addressing community-defined issues with a view to inform social action designed to ameliorate social problems and improve social conditions. Thus, it is intended for the research to provide accurate empirical evidence relating to specific topics that can inform and empower stakeholders for purposes of articulating needs, advocacy, policy making and program development. It is important for the research to be responsive to community and stakeholder's needs and produce information that they can actually use. To accomplish these goals a research team composed of researchers and representatives of the community and stakeholder groups work collaboratively in developing the research plan, conduct the research and disseminate the results.

Other characteristics of community-based research include: the researchers role involves close collaboration with stakeholders through regular strategic meetings and reports on the progress of the research, the researcher balancing the role of being an 'insider' to the research with that of an 'objective' observer, a focus on the development of skills and experiences of stakeholders and research participants and a specific plan for communication and dissemination of research findings.

As Aboriginal people assume greater influence over research conducted in their communities, a number of principle and ethical guidelines have been developed to ensure the research is respectful to individuals, communities and cultural traditions and practices, as well as being beneficial to Aboriginal people. A set of principles, ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP), have been widely adopted by researchers conducting research with Aboriginal people. Ownership means that a community collectively owns the knowledge shared with the researcher in data collection. Control assumes that

Aboriginal people have the right to control all aspects of the research including defining the research questions, the methodology used, questions asked, the conduct of the data gathering, the analysis of data and the dissemination of the findings. Access refers to the ability for Aboriginal people to examine data that is gathered. Possession means that Aboriginal people take control over the research data.

In community-based research, the researcher must, therefore, struggle to find a workable balance between conducting a study that will ensure validity and credibility of the research findings and ensuring that findings are meaningful and useful to the stakeholders and participants.

The TARP was guided by the above principles of community-based research. As stated in Chapter 1, the TARP was overseen by TARP and the TARP Steering Committee working closely with the Research Director from start to finish. Fourteen topics relating to Aboriginal people in Toronto were studied (see: Table 1A). The TARP utilized triangulation approach to the research using both quantitative qualitative methods in gathering the data to ensure that both broad-based and in-depth picture of the circumstances of Aboriginal people in Toronto could be gained. Six research methodologies were employed in the TARP study.

2.2.1 Community Survey

In order to gain the views of a large number of Aboriginal people in Toronto/GTA, a community survey in the form of a self-administrated questionnaire was developed. Several drafts of the questionnaire were vetted by TASSC and the TARP Steering Committee and a pre-test of instruments was conducted before being finalized by the research team.

An important methodological task of any study is being able to claim that a sample of Aboriginal people accurately 'represents' the general

34 A similar approach to research ethics relating to research involving Aboriginal people has recently been taken by the key academic Research Councils including the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada articulated in the recently released: Inter-Agency Panel on Research Ethics. (2010). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

population of the group being studied. Two related issues arise in this regard; the size of the sample and the 'representativeness' of the sample.

The size of the sample is critical to the degree of confidence about the validity of the findings pertaining to the entire population of Aboriginal people in Toronto. The TARP study administered the community survey to a sample of 623 self-identified Aboriginal individuals in Toronto/GTA. In addition, in-person interviews were conducted with 436 Aboriginal key respondents (see below), for a total sample of 1,059. It is believed that this sample is sufficiently large to make accurate generalizations about Aboriginal people in Toronto.

A second challenge in conducting research with urban Aboriginal people relates to the locating of a mathematical random or representative sample of the overall urban Aboriginal population. There are no comprehensive lists of Aboriginal people residing in Toronto with which to draw a random sample. The TARP research relied on two sampling methods to attempt to ensure a representative sample as possible. First, researchers attended a number of community events such as powwows, socials, feasts, Aboriginal organizations' annual meetings and other gatherings as well as going to areas of the city where Aboriginal people were and administered the questionnaire. Second, a 'reputational' or 'snowball' technique was used whereby Aboriginal individuals referred other people that might be willing to fill out the questionnaire. Using these procedures it is believed that TARP has achieved a sample that is representative of the general population of Aboriginal people in Toronto.

An 88-item questionnaire was administered to a sample of 623 Aboriginal people in Toronto/GTA. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions on the topics of demographics and mobility, the Aboriginal middle class, poverty and social services, housing, culture and identity, urban Aboriginal governance, Aboriginal children and youth, law and justice, Aboriginal women, Aboriginal men, seniors and Elders, two-spirit and transgendered and the Aboriginal arts.

The community survey was administered between September, 2009 and March, 2010 by five Aboriginal researchers with experience in

conducting research. Respondents were informed of the purpose nature of the study, advised that their participation was voluntary and told that their responses would be confidential. A \$5 gift card was given to each participant. Results from the community survey were coded and statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) by members of the research team.³⁵

2.2.2 Key Respondent Interviews

An important component of the TARP research was key respondent interviews which relate to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. That is, in an effort to be consistent with the community surveys (and increase the sample size) a number of both closed open-ended questions in the key informant interview guide were same as in the community survey questionnaire. In person interviews were held with a sample of 287 Aboriginal people using a 133-item interview guide focusing on the topics listed above. Respondents were selected using the sampling methods described above.

Interviews, on average, took one and one half hours to complete. Interviewees were given a \$5 gift certificate. Interviews took place at a variety of locations including people's homes, offices, restaurants, coffee shops and other gathering places. The questions that were common between the community survey and interview guide were coded and statistically analysed together using SPSS. The unique interview guide questions were coded and analysed separately using SPSS.

A second interview guide was developed for Aboriginal home people in Toronto. This component of the study involved interviewing a sample of 140 self-identified Aboriginal homeless people using a 49-item interview guide designed to ask about their particular circumstances. The sample included homeless people in a variety of situations including those living on the street, those accessing shelters and drop-in centres, those who were 'couch-surfing', Aboriginal men, women, youth, seniors, single mothers, two-spirited people, those involved with the justice system. Interviews were conducted at a variety of settings by four Aboriginal researchers.

35 See Appendix A for a list of the TARP Research Team.

2.2.3 Focus Groups

As a research method, focus groups bring a diversity of people together in a semi-structured conversation about a particular topic related to the research. A facilitator coordinates discussion using a number of questions and the content of the discussion are recorded. Focus group participants received an honorarium of \$20. The TARP study conducted 21 focus groups involving 243 participants from March, 2009 to January, 2011 on all the topics of the research as follows:

Table 2A: Focus Groups

FOCUS GROUP TOPIC	DATE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
1 Two-Spirit and Transgender	March 20/09	8
2 Homelessness	March 31	7
3 Children, Youth and Family	April 15	12
4 Poverty and Social Services	April 16	45
5 Aboriginal Arts	April 17	12
6 Aboriginal Men	April 20	15
7 Housing	April 21	10
8 Middle Class	April 21	7
9 Elders and Seniors	April 22	10
10 Culture and Identity	April 28	15
11 Justice and Policing	May 6	10
12 High School Youth	May 7	10
13 At-risk Youth	May 11	10

FOCUS GROUP TOPIC	DATE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
14 Aboriginal Women	May 13	7
15 Governance (Two-spirit and Transgender)	July 27	7
16 Governance (Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto)	September 1	10
17 Governance (Nishnawbe Homes)	November 23	10
18 Governance (Native Child and Family Services of Toronto)	November 26	10
19 Aboriginal Arts	July 28/10	10
20 Homelessness	December 17	10
21 Homelessness	January/11	8
Total Participants		243

2.2.4 Life Histories

Life histories, or individual oral narratives, is an in-depth qualitative research method which asks individuals to look back on their lives and report their experiences relating to a particular topic. Valuable insights can be gained as well as an understanding of how events unfolded in a person's life. Participants are asked to 'tell their stories relating to their biographical experiences about living in the community'. While a general interview guide was used, the life histories were more like conversations than structured interviews. Interviews on average took six to eight hours over two or three sessions. Participants received a \$200 honorarium in recognition of their contribution to the research. Life history participants were selected as representing a particular topic of the research including youth, men, women, Elders, two-spirited, community leaders, middle class, homeless, artists, long and short-term residents. Individuals were recommended by members of the TARP Steering Committee and the research team.

The life histories of the following 15 individuals were carried out:

- Jacqui LaValley
- Lillian McGregor
- Andrew Wesley
- Francis Sanderson
- Steve Teekins
- Doe O'Brien
- Tony Metatawabin
- Vern Harper
- Tim Renollet
- Maurice Garneau
- Katrina Lavasseur
- Jason Bearg
- Waawaate Fobister
- Rose Stella
- John Keesig

2.2.5 Case Studies

Another qualitative methodology utilized by the TARP is the case study of six social service Aboriginal organizations in Toronto which are members of TASSC. The case study method entails a detailed and intensive study of a single case and typically makes use of a variety of methods including document review, interviews and observation and focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the structure and functioning of a particular organization. Researchers utilized an interview guide to interview a variety of individuals associated with the organizations including staff, board members and clients. They also reviewed documents and engaged in observations of different activities within the agency. Case study agencies were selected by the TARP Steering Committee. The following agencies were selected for the case studies:

Table 2B: Case Study Agencies

AGENCY	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS
Native Child and Family Services of Toronto	28
Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto	14
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations	6
Council Fire Native Cultural Centre	28
Nishnawbe Homes	5
Native Canadian Centre	14
Total Participants	95

2.2.6 Photovoice

Photovoice, part of the larger image-based research approach a methodology that put cameras in the hands of individuals or excluded from decision-making in order to capture their voices of their lives. Photovoice is designed to empower the research participants by taking their concerns as the central research focus asserting the value of their experience. It also enables people to better understand their relationship to their community and communicate their views of their social reality to agency workers, policy makers and the general public. Further, it provides an insight into the lives of individuals whose voices are rarely heard. It assumes that the familiarity of their surroundings give participants the ability to be able to portray aspects of their community and illustrate their lives in a way that conventional research methods cannot achieve.

The photovoice component of the TARP research entailed Aboriginal youth involved with programs of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Individuals involved in these youth groups agreed to take pictures to document aspects of their lives in Toronto over an eight-week period from March to November 2010. Cameras were provided to participants and two members of the 7th Generation Image Makers, an arts program at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, were hired to assist the youth with technical aspects of the picture taking. In all, approximately 1,500 photos were taken pertaining to a vast array of Aboriginal youths' lives in the city. Youth were also encouraged to write a brief description of the pictures. Youth were given a \$25 honorarium for participating in the project.

A photo exhibit of the youth pictures were hung on display at Toronto City Hall during National Aboriginal Week in June, 2010. There were 12 Aboriginal youth that participated in the photovoice project. The application of this method has provided an invaluable insight into the more standard research methods and has led to a variety of findings that are more meaningful final analysis of the findings.

2.3 Total TARP Sample

Table 2C summarizes the sample of the various components of the TARP research.

Table 2C: Total TARP Sample by Research Component

RESEARCH COMPONENT	SAMPLE SIZE
Community Survey	623
Key Informant Interviews	436
Focus Groups	242
Life Histories	16
Case Studies	95
Photovoice	12
Total sample	1,424

Chapter 3

DEMOGRAPHICS AND MOBILITY PATTERNS

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has the largest Aboriginal population of any city in Ontario.
- Since 2001, Toronto's Aboriginal population has grown by 33% and has more than doubled its size since 1981.
- Toronto's Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population across all age categories.
- There is a large percentage of Aboriginal women in the city and many of them are heading single-parent families.
- Anishnawbe and Status Indians are the main cultural and legal identity categories in Toronto.
- Aboriginal people in Toronto live in a diversity of areas across the GTA, tend to concentrate in lower-income neighbourhoods.
- Mobility rates are high for Aboriginal people living in Toronto and many maintain links with their communities of origin.
- A significant number of Aboriginal people in Toronto live in poverty, with an equivalent proportion is achieving varying degrees of economic success.
- There is a higher proportion of skilled Aboriginal professionals in Toronto than found in other urban centres in Ontario.
- Aboriginal people in Toronto have made significant advancements in educational attainment with two-spirited people having the highest percentage of university graduate degrees.
- Aboriginal men in Toronto are experiencing higher rates of poverty and lower levels of educational and economic success than Aboriginal women and two-spirited people.

3.1 Population Growth and 'Ethnic Mobility'

This chapter provides a snapshot of key demographic and mobility indicators of Aboriginal people in Toronto.³⁶ Based primarily upon the quantitative findings from the TARP community survey and the key informant interviews, this chapter also incorporates complementary information from the 2006 Census and other related studies. In using Census data however, it is important to note its limitations in terms of its under-representation of Aboriginal people.³⁷ In addition, the recent Census reform initiated by the federal government including the dropping of the Long-Form Census could have significantly negative implications for the gathering of data and research on urban Aboriginal people.

According to Statistics Canada (2006 Census) the GTA has the largest (31,910) Aboriginal population of any city in Ontario, more than twice that of Ottawa (12,965), or Thunder Bay (10,055). The Aboriginal population of Toronto comprises 13% of all Aboriginal people in Ontario. Importantly however, these figures remain significantly less than the 70,000 Toronto Aboriginal residents currently estimated by the agencies that serve this population.³⁸

The growth of the Toronto Aboriginal community can be considered as part of a larger national trend in Aboriginal urbanization since the early 1950s. Since the Census of 2001, Toronto's Aboriginal population has grown by 33% and has more than doubled its size since the 1981 population count of 13,015.

What is notable about these high levels of Aboriginal population growth in urban centres is that, in contrast to the early years or the 'first wave' of movement from reserves to urban centres from 1951 to

1971, these increases are now understood as relating in many ways to the phenomenon of 'ethnic mobility'. In other words, recent increases in urban Aboriginal populations are seen as less the result of people moving from reserves to cities and of natural increases related to birth rates and more the result of the Indian Act and its related amendments (Bill C-31 and C-3) that have broadened the criteria defining Indian Status as well as a growing willingness on the part of the general population to identify with their Aboriginal ancestry.

Because the earlier and more restrictive criteria for determining Indian Status discriminated against Aboriginal women, in that many were unfairly denied status and forced to leave their reserve communities over the years and move to urban centres, legislating more inclusive criteria that has now led, in many cases, to the reinstatement of their status and has resulted in significant increases in the number of Status Indian women in the city.⁴⁰ As well, because of the prevalence of Aboriginal non-Aboriginal relationships and marriages in the city and the increased social acceptance of Aboriginal ancestry and identity, there has been significant growth rate in urban Métis populations generally.⁴¹

3.2 Identity Profiles: Age, Gender, Status and Cultural Affiliation

In keeping with national trends both on-reserve and in urban centres, the Aboriginal population living in Toronto is younger than non-Aboriginal population across all age categories, with a much higher proportion of seniors and a higher proportion of children and youth. In 2006, the median age of the Aboriginal population in Toronto was 37 years, compared to 37 years for the non-Aboriginal population and

36 The term Aboriginal is understood within this work to include those who identify with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e.: Indian, Métis and Inuit.

37 Acknowledged by Statistics Canada as a limitation, Census under-counting of Aboriginal people on reserve and in the urban centres is often attributed to high rates of mobility and homelessness within the Aboriginal community as well as a growing Aboriginal refusal to participate. For further reading see Brian Edward Hubner, 'This is the Whiteman's Law': Aboriginal Resistance, Bureaucratic Change and the Census of Canada, 1830–2006 (Springer Science+Business Media B.V., 2007).

38 For further reading see City of Toronto, 'Toronto's Racial Diversity' at http://www.toronto.ca/toronto_facts/diversity.htm.

39 Norris, M.J. (2003). Aboriginal mobility and migration within urban Canada: Outcomes, factors and implications. In D. Newhouse & E. Peters (Eds.) *Not Strangers in These Parts: Aboriginal People in Cities*. Ottawa: Policy Research Institute, p 62.

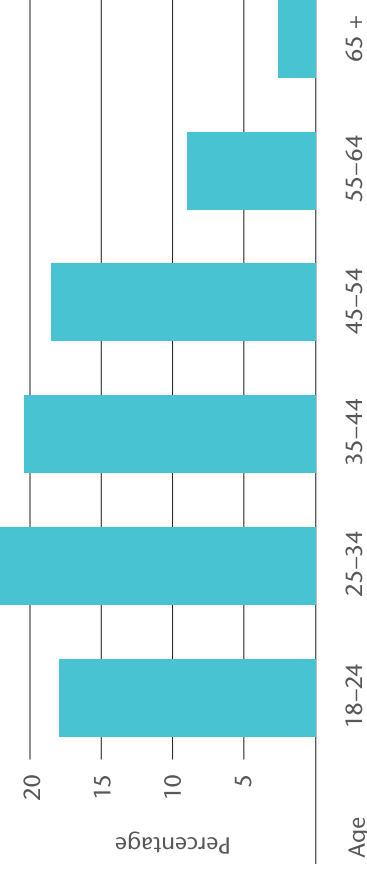
40 For further reading see Peters, E. 2006. 'We do not lose our treaty rights outside the . . . reserves'. *Challenging the scales of social service provision for First Nations women in Canadian cities*. *Geojournal* 65: 315–27.

41 For further reading see Guimond, E. (2003). Fuzzy Definitions and Population Explosion: Changing Identities of Aboriginal Groups in Canada. In D. Newhouse & E. Peters (Eds.) *Not Strangers in These Parts: Aboriginal People in Cities*. Ottawa: Policy Research Institute.

under 40% of Aboriginal residents are under the age of 25 compared to 32% of non-Aboriginal Torontonians (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The TARP findings also pointed to a young Aboriginal population in Toronto. In spite of not including participants under the age of 18 years within the community survey and key informant interview, Chart 3A shows that 18% percent of respondents were nonetheless 24 years of age and under. This high percentage of Aboriginal children and youth in Toronto suggest the importance of policy and program development in the areas of early childhood development, family support, youth programming, education and training, and employment opportunities; topics addressed in more detail in the Children and Youth Chapter.

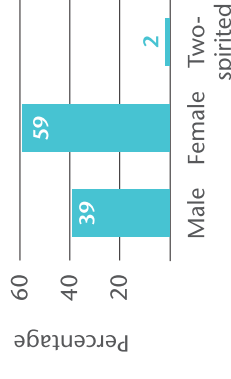
Chart 3A: Age of Participants (Quantitative n=811)



The gender profile of the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) community survey and key informant interview respondents corresponds well with the phenomenon of ‘ethnic mobility’ relating to legislative changes to the Indian Act in that, of the 835 respondents, Aboriginal women accounted for 59% of participants while men and two-spirited accounted for only 39% and 2% respectively.

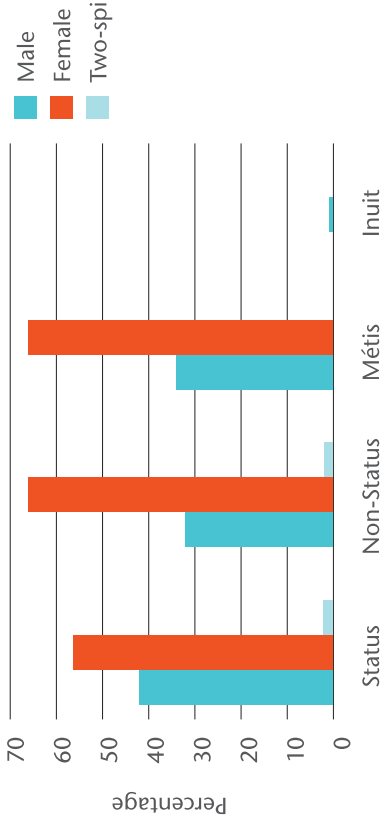
Moreover, in terms of the relationship between gender and Aboriginal identity, we see from Chart 3C that Aboriginal women occupy a majority position across all the identity categories of Status, non-Status and Métis. The higher number of women across identity

Chart 3B: Gender of TARP Participants (Quantitative n=835)



categories in Toronto corresponds well with the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that also drew links between high rates of urbanization and Aboriginal women, the legacy of discriminatory Indian Act legislation and the prevalence of sexism and associated violence against Aboriginal women in many First Nations communities.⁴²

Chart 3C: Gender Status Profile of TARP Participants (Quantitative n=777)



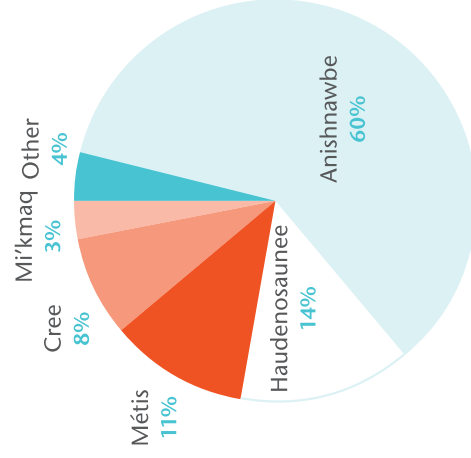
The TARP data further corresponds with the 2006 Census in terms of the large percentage (79%) of residents that identify as Status Indian while a minority (12%) indicated being non-Status. Those respondents identifying as Métis, however, appear to be underrepresented within the TARP study, accounting for only 8% of the population contrast to the 29% reported by Statistics Canada.

Table 3A: Political and Legal Status

LEGAL STATUS (QUANTITATIVE n=786)	PERCENTAGE
Status Indian	79%
Non-Status	12%
Métis	8%
Inuit	1%

In terms of the cultural identity of TARP respondents, Chart 3D highlights a degree of Aboriginal cultural diversity present within Toronto where a majority (60%) of respondents self-identified as Anishnawbe, followed by a minority of Haudenosaunee (14%), Métis (11%), Cree (8%) and Mi'kmaq (3%).

Chart 3D: Cultural Identity of Respondents (Quantitative n=835)



It is important to further mention that TARP key informant interview respondents spoke of an increasing participation of international Indigenous people within the Toronto urban Aboriginal social service community. Sixty one percent (61%) of interview respondents indicated that international Indigenous people are accessing Aboriginal social services within Toronto, while 6% noted that they participate at community events.

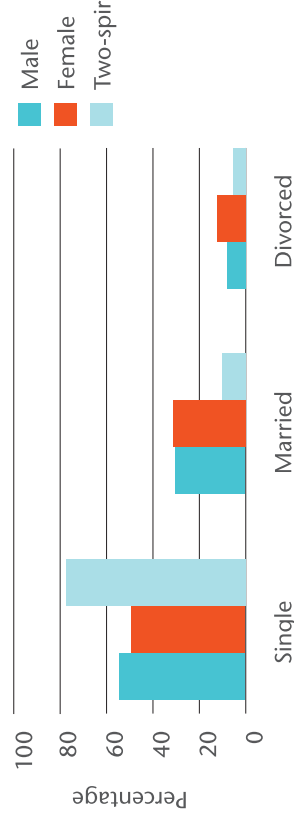
3.3 Aboriginal Families

The importance of family and raising healthy and well-adjusted children who contribute to their community was recently reported in Urban Aboriginal People's Study⁴³ as key determinants of successful Aboriginal people living in Toronto.

The 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey: Family, Community and Child Care pointed to some general trends in Aboriginal families across Canada, including larger families with younger parents, prominent role of extended family and communities members in caring for Aboriginal children, and a greater prevalence of low-income families when compared to the non-Aboriginal population.⁴⁴

In terms of the relationship status of TARP respondents, we see overall the TARP findings point to a slight majority (53%) of respondents who are single, 31% who are married or common law, and 16% indicating that they are either divorced or separated. Moreover, vast majority (78%) of two-spirited respondents were single, with minority being either married or divorced.

Chart 3E: Relationship Status and Gender (Quantitative n=839)



43 For further reading see UAPS Toronto Report at <http://uaps.ca/knowledge/reports/>.

44 For further reading see Aboriginal Children's Survey: Family, Community and Child Care. Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-634-X-No. 001, Analytical Paper. See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-634-XWE2008001&lang=eng>.

In terms of single parents or guardians, the 2006 Census further revealed that when compared with their non-Aboriginal peers, Aboriginal children in Toronto were more likely to live with a lone mother (34% versus 14%), a lone father (5% versus 2%), a grandparent (with no parent present) (1.3% versus 0.2%) or with another relative (1.4% versus 0.4%).

What is notable from the TARP data is that although 18% of two-spirited respondents reported having children, none indicated that they lived with their children. Also, the TARP data revealed a significantly high proportion (84%) of single parent families headed by women (see Chart 3F and 3G).

The high prevalence of single, two-spirited respondents neither married or common law and parents not living with their children suggest the need for family, day care, youth and relationship support for this segment of the Aboriginal community.

Moreover, the predominance within the Toronto Aboriginal community of large, single parent families headed by women has important implication for program and service planning in terms of the need for day care and flexible employment practices, family support services, relationship counselling, child and youth recreation and mentorship opportunities. These implications of these findings are discussed in more detail in the Two-Spirited, Women, and Children and Youth chapters of this report.

3.4 Residency and Mobility

Whether through the movement from reserve communities to urban centres or because of trends in urban ‘ethnic mobility’, it remains clear that Aboriginal people are increasingly living in cities. The 2006 Census indicated that only 6.7 % of the Aboriginal population resides in Canadian cities and by the last national count in 2006, this number had increased to between 53 and 70 percent, depending on the information source and how one defines the term Aboriginal.

In Toronto, Aboriginal urbanization over the years has resulted in diverse residential patterns and complex forms of community development and governance in the city. As well, there is a significant degree of mobility within the city, between cities and through the maintenance of links to communities of origin. From Chart 3H and Map 3I we can see that Aboriginal people live in many different areas across the GTA, tending to concentrate in the city of Toronto and the lesser degrees to the west in Peel (Brampton) and Halton (Mississauga, Oakville, and Milton), to the east in Durham (Pickering and Ajax) and to the north in York (Vaughan and Markham).

Chart 3F: Respondents who Live with Their Children (Quantitative n=620)

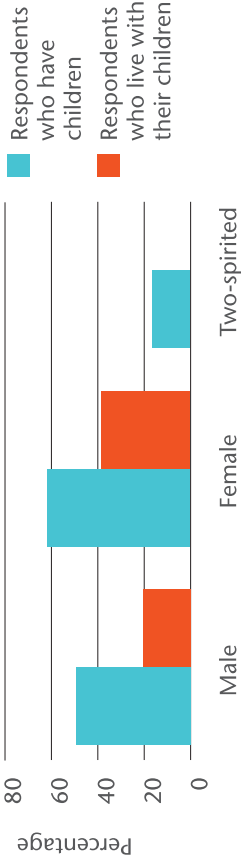
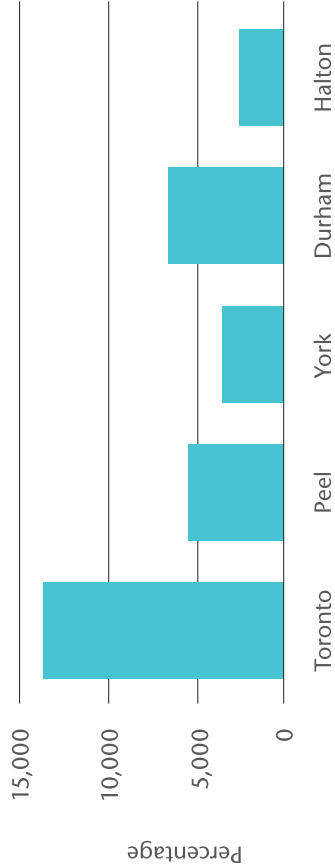


Chart 3G: Single Parents Living with Children (Quantitative n=90)

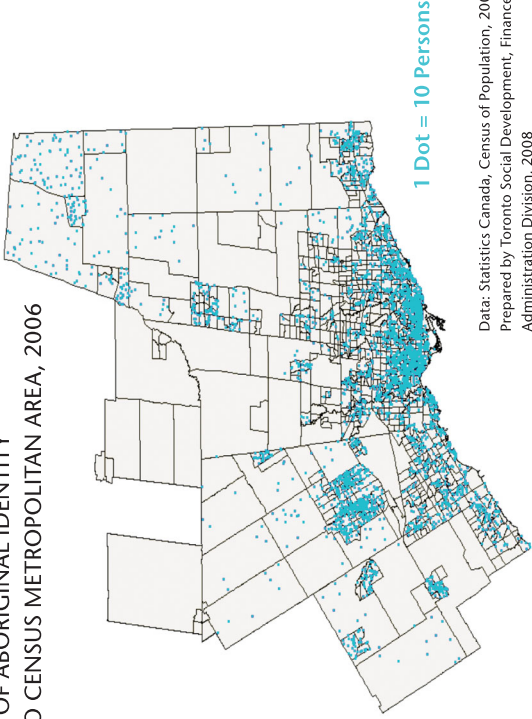


Chart 3H: Aboriginal Population Across the GTA (2006 Census data)



Map 1: Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)⁴⁵ 2006

**PERSONS OF ABORIGINAL IDENTITY
TORONTO CENSUS METROPOLITAN AREA, 2006**



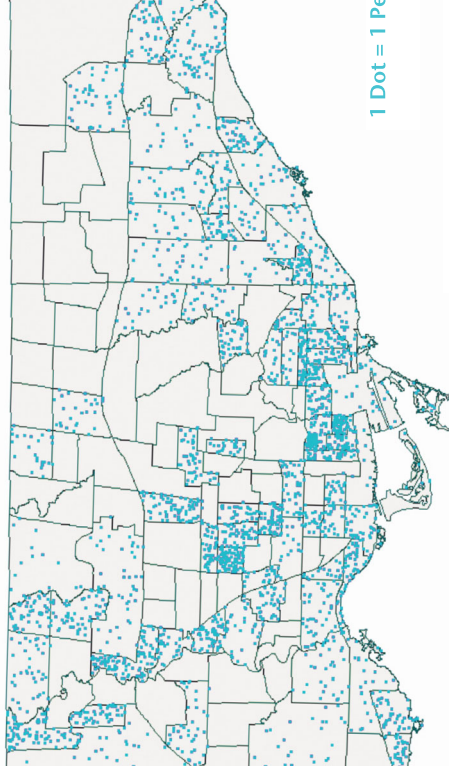
Data: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006
Prepared by Toronto Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, 2008

45 Although the 2006 Census Aboriginal population residential data for the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) is very insightful for this study, it is important to note that the CMA for Toronto does not fully capture or correspond with the GTA in that it does not include Burlington in the West nor the eastern parts of Durham (Clarington, Scugog, and Brock). As well, it includes some additional areas north of York and Peel including Mono, New Tecumseth, and Bradford West Gwillimbury. As a result of these boundary differences, the CMA Aboriginal population count for Toronto is 26,575 while the count for the GTA is 31,910.

Looking more closely at the City of Toronto, we see again that Aboriginal people are choosing to live in a diversity of neighbourhoods with concentrations in a number of specific areas. What is notable about these areas with a higher number of Aboriginal residents is that they are closely with the 'U' shape pattern of low-income neighbourhoods and high incidences of air pollution.⁴⁶ (See Map #2 and Map #3).

Map 2: Aboriginal Residential Patterns in City of Toronto 2006

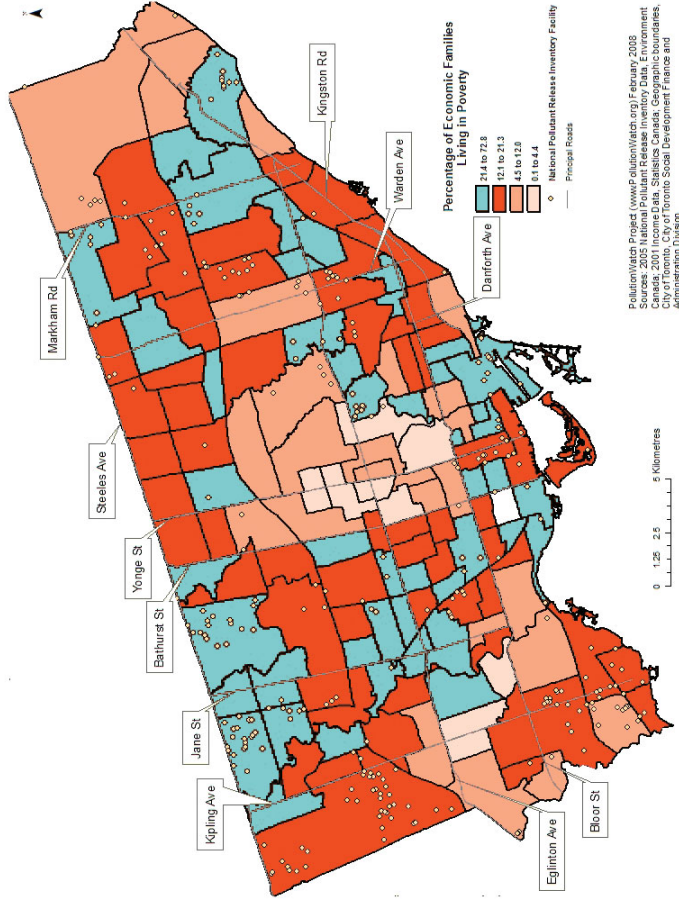
**ABORIGINAL PERSONS, 2006
CITY OF TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOODS**



City of Toronto Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, 2008

46 For more reading, see 2008 Pollution Watch Fact Sheet: An examination of pollution and pollution in the City of Toronto at: http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/pdf/pollutionwatch_toronto_fact_sheet.pdf.

Map 3: Poverty in Toronto's Neighbourhoods⁴⁷



The high correlation between high rates of Aboriginal residency and low-income neighbourhoods is particularly evident in the areas of Regent Park, Cabbagetown South, North St. James Town, Moss Park, the Church-Yonge Corridor, Oakwood-Vaughan, Wychwood, Caledonia-Fairbank, Blake-Jones, and Eglemount and Lawrence.⁴⁸

47 *Ibid.*

48 For further review of correlations between high rates of Aboriginal residency and low-income neighbourhoods please see the City of Toronto 'Neighbourhood Maps' at: http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/profiles_map_and_index.htm.

In a recent 2011 study of poverty in Toronto,⁴⁹ these areas of high levels of poverty were further identified as being marked by wider gaps between rental costs and income, worsening housing conditions and high rates of crime relating to drugs and vandalism.

Moreover, in terms of Aboriginal residential patterns generally a parallel study found that in seeking out low income/working class neighbourhoods, Aboriginal people were drawn to areas already settled by friends and families. Where available, they sought single-family attached homes and tended to share their units with a larger number of people, relative to the non-Aboriginal population.

A further consideration in terms of low income Aboriginal residential patterns, is that most of the support services for Aboriginal people in Toronto are located in the downtown core of the city. The western part of the city from High Park to Etobicoke, which has a significant Aboriginal population, has very few services available to them. A recent review of Aboriginal services by Native Child and Family Services pointed to the need for additional services in this area.⁵¹

It is important to also note that outside of these areas of high concentrations of Aboriginal residents in low income areas, Map 1 to 3 point to Aboriginal people living in a diversity of more affluent neighbourhoods scattered across the City of Toronto and the GTA, which correspond with varying degrees of economic success discussed below.

In terms of mobility, urban Aboriginal people have recently been found to have high rates of movement or 'a churn effect' between urban centres and reserves and within and between urban centres.

49 For further reading see the United Way's 2011, 'Vertical Poverty: Declining Income, Housing Quality, and Community Life in Toronto's Inner Suburban High Rise Apartments' <http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/whatWeDo/reports/ExecSummary-PovertybyPostalCodeVerticalPoverty-Final.pdf>.

50 For further reading see Maxim, P. White, J. Beavon, D. 2000. *Patterns of Urban Residential Settlement among Canada's First Nations Communities in PSC Discussion Papers Series*. Volume Issue 8 Article 1.

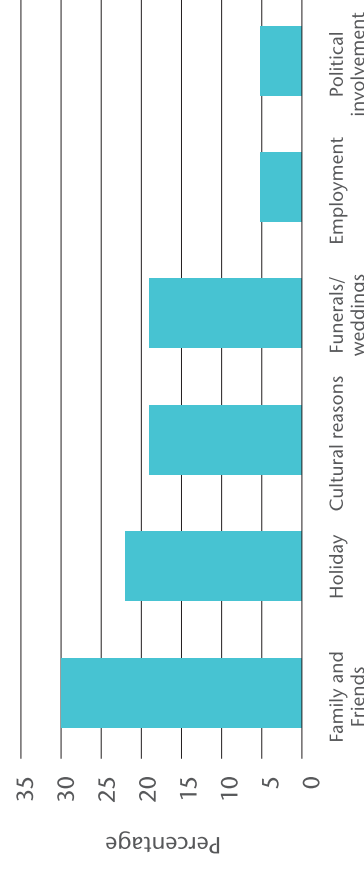
51 For further reading see, Native Child and Family Services, 2011. *Little Voices Child and Family Centres: A Framework for the Delivery of Native Children's Services in the City of Toronto*.

52 For further reading see Norris, M.J. 2003. 'Aboriginal mobility and migration within urban Canada: Outcomes, factors, and implications'. In D. Newhouse and E. Peters, Eds, *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, 51-78. Ottawa: Policy Research Initiative.

According to the 2006 Census, about half (48%) of the Toronto Aboriginal population had lived at the same address five years ago, compared to 55% of the non-Aboriginal population. As well, from 2001 to 2006, about three in 10 (31%) Aboriginal people had moved at least once within Toronto, and the rest (21%) had moved to Toronto from another community.

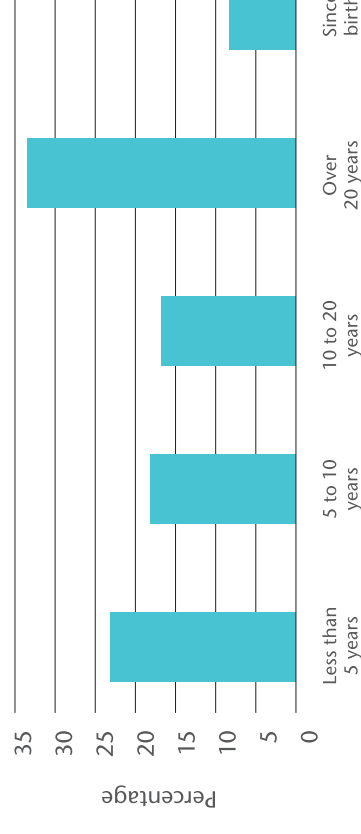
Further suggesting a high level of residential movement, the vast majority (73%) of TARP community survey and interview respondents indicated that they had not been born in Toronto. Moreover, 70% of TARP respondents indicated that they maintained links with their communities of origin and, as outlined in Chart 3I, some of the main reasons include visiting family and friends for holidays, for cultural reasons and for funerals and weddings.

Chart 3I: Reasons for Visiting Your Community of Origin (Quantitative n=838)



Nonetheless, there is also a significant number of Aboriginal people in Toronto that have taken up long-term, stable residency. As shown in Chart 3J, the majority (58%) of respondents have lived in Toronto for ten years or more, with 41% having lived in Toronto for over two decades.

Chart 3J: Length of Stay in Toronto (Quantitative n=703)



The recently completed Urban Aboriginal People's Study further pointed to two main groups of Aboriginal residents in Toronto: those who were born and raised somewhere other than Toronto (first generation), and those who were born and raised in Toronto but whose family is from another place (second generation). A third and smaller group consists of those who were born and raised in Toronto and whose parents and/or grandparents are also from Toronto.⁵³

3.5 Aboriginal Income

It is perhaps not surprising, given the residential patterns of Aboriginal people living in low-income neighbourhoods outlined above, that poverty has been a long-term challenge for Aboriginal people living in Toronto.⁵⁴

According to Statistics Canada, in 2005 over one in four (25%) Aboriginal people living in Toronto were living below the low-income

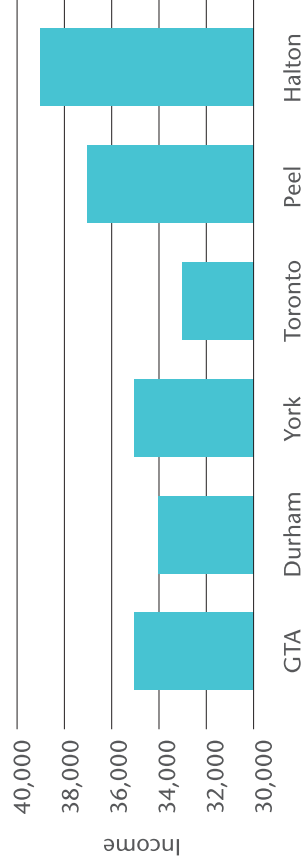
⁵³ For further reading, see UAPS Toronto Report at <http://uaps.ca/knowledge/reports/>.

⁵⁴ The 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force (a study of 22 urban centres on Ontario, including Toronto) found income levels for Aboriginal people in Ontario to be significantly lower than the general population.

cut-off (LICO) point, compared to 18% of non-Aboriginal people.⁵⁵ In addition, about one-third (32%) of Aboriginal children (aged 14 years and under) in Toronto were living under the LICO, compared to 23% of non-Aboriginal children.

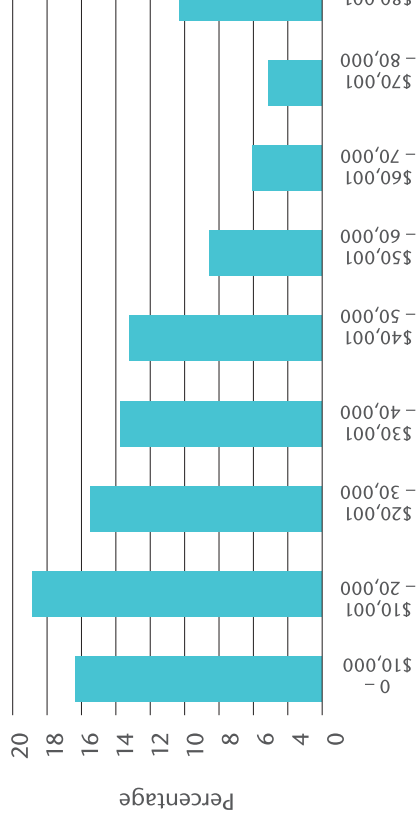
In terms of those earning \$40,000 and over, Statistics Canada (2005) reported that 30% of the Aboriginal people fell within this category, in contrast to the 34% of the non-Aboriginal population. What is further notable in terms of the overall GTA, is that the city of Toronto had the lowest average income (\$33,000) for Aboriginal residents, while Halton had the highest at \$40,000 (see Chart 3K).

Chart 3K: Average Income Across the GTA (Census 2006)



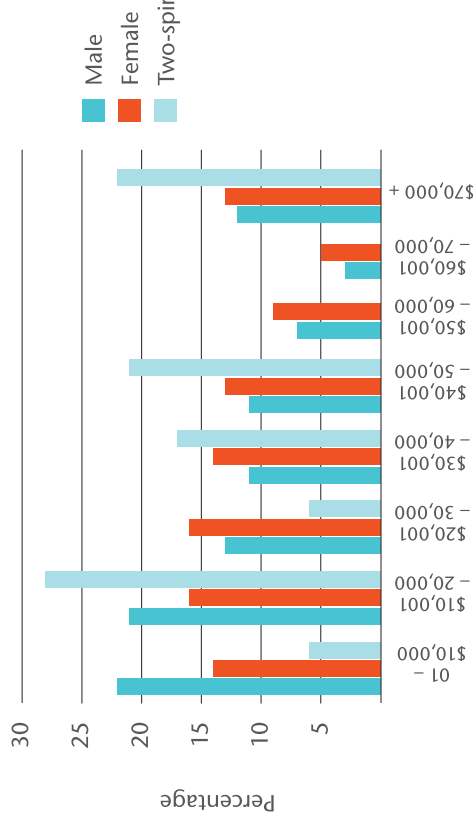
The findings from the TARP community survey and interviews point to similar levels of poverty where a majority (63%) of respondents earned less than \$40,000 per year. Of the total number of respondents, 35% earned less than \$20,000 per year while 16% earned less than \$10,000 per year.

Chart 3L: Family Income (Quantitative n=793)



In terms of income across gender, we see from Chart 3M that Aboriginal men have the highest representation (42%) in the below \$20,000 year range, with also the highest percentage (21%) of those earning less than \$10,000. Moreover, Aboriginal men occupy the lowest portion of the higher income categories of \$40,000 and above.

Chart 3M: Income Across Gender (Quantitative n=839)



55 Statistics Canada uses the concept of LICO to indicate an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family.

Chart 3M further reveals that, of those respondents that indicated being two-spirited, there are high proportions (33%) earning below \$20,000 as well as a significant percentage (22%) of this population earning \$70,000 and above.

Moreover, although a significant proportion of Aboriginal women (47%) fall within the below \$30,000 per year income bracket, Chart 3M further shows us that Aboriginal women (34%) are out-earning men (30%), but trailing two-spirited respondents (44%) in terms of the percentage of those earning above \$40,000 per year.

The distribution of income within the Toronto Aboriginal community outlined in Chart 3L therefore points to the presence of a substantial number (37%) of economically successful Aboriginal people earning \$40,000 or more. The large percentage (35%) of Aboriginal people that are earning less than \$20,000 per year suggests a trend towards a disparity between those that are achieving varying degree of economic success and those that are not.⁵⁶

3.6 Aboriginal Employment

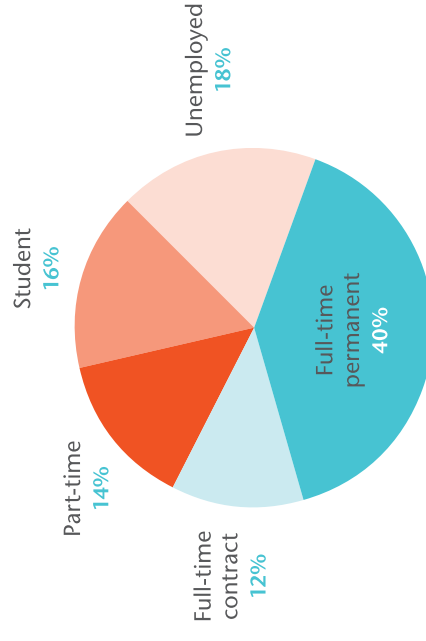
Corresponding with the prevalence of those Aboriginal people earning less than \$20,000 per year, the 2006 Census further found that for the Aboriginal working age population (25 to 54), the unemployment rate was higher for Aboriginal people (8%) than it was for the non-Aboriginal population (5.4%). Across the GTA, Aboriginal unemployment rates were highest (11%) in Toronto and lowest (6%) in Halton.

Moreover, unemployment rates were higher for Toronto's young people. In 2006, 16.2% of First Nations youth aged 15 to 24 years were unemployed, as were 18.1% of Métis youth, and 15.2% of non-Aboriginal youth.

What is further notable is that, in terms of employment rates, 2006 Census found that Métis men and women aged 25 to 54 living in Toronto had employment rates (83.4 % and 72.6%, respectively) most resembled those of the non-Aboriginal population (86.9% and 74.0% respectively).

The findings from the TARP community survey and interviews however, point to overall higher levels of unemployment (18%) as well as the prevalence of full-time (40%) and contract positions (12%) those who were employed. As well, 14% of TARP respondents indicated that they were employed on a part-time bases. (Chart 3N)

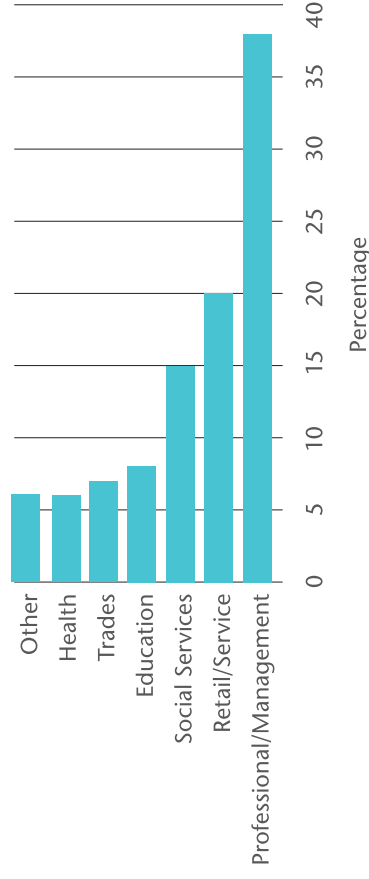
Chart 3N: Employment Status (Quantitative n=673)



More specifically, from Chart 3O we see that of those respondents presently employed, a significant percentage (37%) indicated they were in professional and/or managerial positions, while the second most common (20%) response was retail and service, followed by working in the social services (15%). Working in the trades and health sector were the least common responses.

56 For further reading on the trend towards income disparity in Toronto, please see the 2010 Hulchanski study, 'The Three Cities in Toronto, Income Polarization Among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005'. http://www.urbancentre.toronto.ca/pdfs/researchbulletins/CUCSR841_Hulchanski_Three_Cities_Toronto.pdf.

Chart 30: Present Occupation (Qualitative n=464)



It is important to note that the TARP findings on employment and occupation categories point to significant gains for Toronto Aboriginal community members over the years. Two earlier studies published in 1970⁵⁷ and 1981⁵⁸ on Aboriginal life in Toronto documented significantly higher unemployment rates (47%) and the prevalence of seasonal work, the trades ('blue collar' jobs), and a small number of 'white collar' clerical positions.

Moreover, the high percentage (37%) of TARP respondents occupying professional/management positions in Toronto contrasts the general service sector orientation (30%) found in the 2007 Ontario Urban Aboriginal Task Force⁵⁹ and points to a higher proportion of skilled Aboriginal professionals in Toronto than found generally in Ontario.

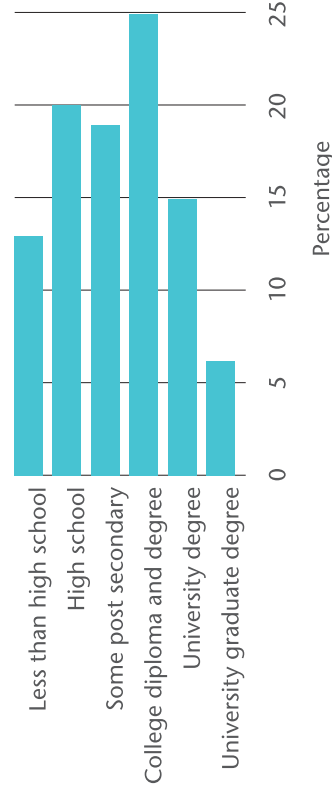
3.7 Aboriginal Education

Closely linked with the above noted improvements in Aboriginal income levels and employment, Aboriginal people living in Toronto

have made significant advancements in educational attainment over the last several decades. The 1970 Nagler study on *the Urbanization of Indians in Toronto* found Aboriginal education levels "well below that of non-Aboriginal people living in the city, but higher than levels in reserves". As well, the 1979 McCaskill study documented relatively low educational levels of Aboriginal people living in Toronto, with 80% having completed Grade 10 or less and only 3% having attained some post-secondary education.

As shown in Chart 3P, a significant majority (65%) of Aboriginal people living in Toronto have either some post secondary education or have completed a college diploma or university degree, with 40% having completed a college diploma and/or university degree and 13% having completed a university graduate degree. Only a small minority (13%) of TARP respondents indicated having attained less than a high school diploma.

Chart 3P: Level of Education Attained (Quantitative n=812)



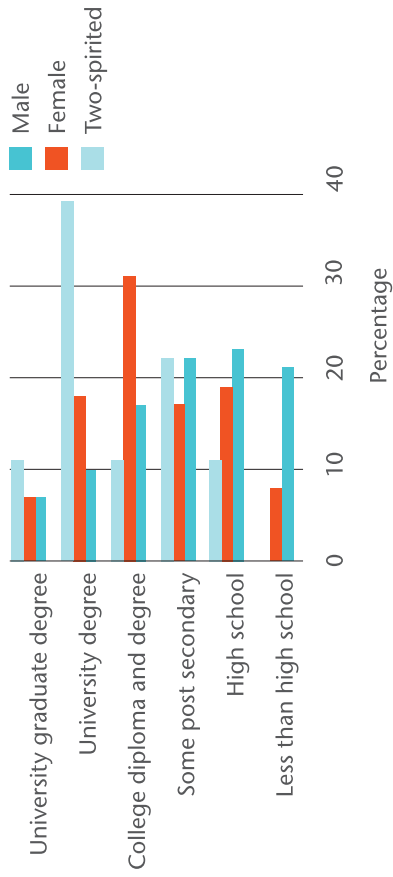
In Chart 3Q we see that, although more Aboriginal women are earning college diplomas and university degrees than their male counterparts, the two-spirited population has the highest representation for those who completed a university degree, including a graduate degree. In contrast, Aboriginal men respondents were more likely to not have finished high school (21%) or have a high school diploma (23%).

57 Nagler, M. (1970). *Indians in the City: A Study of the Urbanization of Indians in Toronto*. Ottawa: Canadian Resource Centre for Anthropology, St. Paul University.

58 McCaskill, D. (1979). *The Urbanization of Canadian Indians in Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver: A Comparative Analysis*. Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, Department of Sociology, York University. Also published in: *Culture* 1(1), 1981.

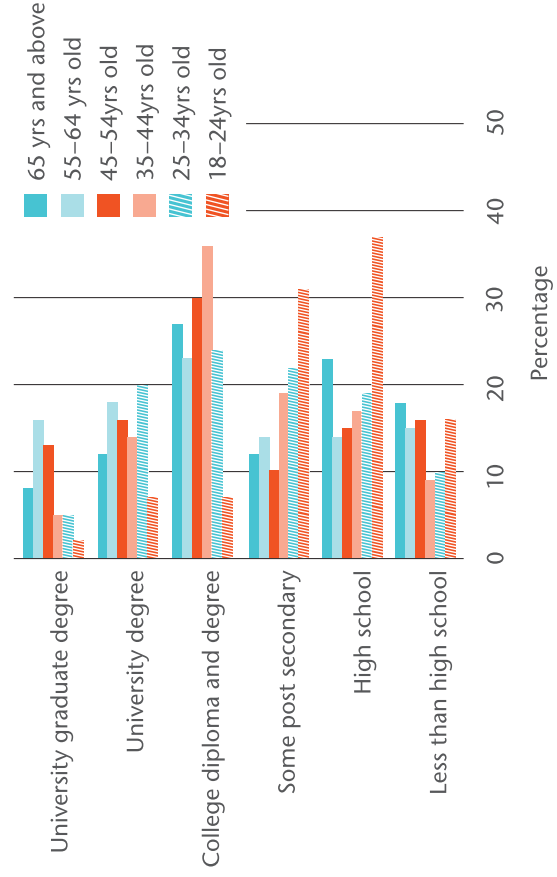
59 For further reading, see 2007 Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Final Report. Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres at <http://www.offfc.org/pdf/UATFOntarioFinalReport.pdf>.

Chart 3Q: Educational Attainment Across Gender (Quantitative n=812)



In looking at Aboriginal educational attainment in Toronto across age, we see in Chart 3R a roughly equal distribution of age categories not having completed high school. Moreover, we see that those between the ages of 35 and 44 are most likely to either have a college diploma and/or a university degree and that those between the ages of 45 and 64 are most likely to have university graduate degrees.

Chart 3R: Educational Attainment Across Age (Quantitative n=837)



In spite of these gains in Toronto Aboriginal education levels, there continues to be a gap in attainment compared to the non-Aboriginal population. In spite of finding higher post secondary completion rates than outlined above in the TARP findings, the 2006 Census still noted discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education levels. More specifically, the Census found that over half of Aboriginal men (53%) and women (55%) aged 25 to 64 had completed post secondary education compared to about two-thirds (66% and 65%, respectively) of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. As well, the Census reported that Aboriginal people were more likely to have completed a post-secondary schooling with a trades credential or with a college diploma whereas the non-Aboriginal population was more likely to have obtained a university certificate, diploma or degree.



ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- There are unmet educational needs in mainstream schools relating to the lack of Aboriginal cultural content, language immersion opportunities and support for learning disabilities.
- Increasing youth gang involvement relates to unmet needs for parenting and family protection, community involvement, addictions and poverty.
- Aboriginal youth spoke highly of existing Aboriginal agency youth and cultural programming, but stressed the need for better outreach, communication and cooperation between agencies.
- There is an unmet need for more affordable, stable housing for Aboriginal youth in a centralized location.
- Aboriginal youth are looking for a greater sense of community and belonging in the city through the creation of a centralized Aboriginal space and an inclusive form of urban Aboriginal governance.

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key considerations of Aboriginal children and youth living in Toronto. In addition to the findings that emerged from the TARP community survey and informant interviews, this chapter also includes the results of three separate focus groups on children and youth experiences as well as some key findings from an organizational case study with Native Child and Family Services Toronto. As well, a variety of other related studies have been incorporated as complementary information.

As outlined in Chapter 3 on demographics, the Toronto Aboriginal population is young and growing and there have been much advancements made over the years in the areas of income, educational attainment and employment. The educational successes that Aboriginal youth in Toronto are achieving are further discussed within this chapter as are the positive contributions that they are making to their families and to the revitalization of Aboriginal culture within the city.

The TARP findings also point however to the prevalence of poverty and families under stress and the many adverse effects that this has on children and youth. As well, this chapter outlines some of the unmet needs in the community and the improvements that Aboriginal youth would like to see in terms of programs and services and community development overall.

As a young kid I got in a lot of trouble because I didn't learn respect and consideration from other people. Often as youth, we are looking at the other kids who are always wanting to cause fights and always up to no good. It was only when I sat down with the Elders, and I actually became aware of what respect, humility and consideration for others was, that I actually began to take this into practice. So often I see youth today without that guidance, more or less, you look at a kid, and you see him getting into trouble, and they automatically label him as having behavioural problems, or he is being rebellious, and so forth. Instead, young kids need to pair up with Elders and be their helpers because the younger kids are more open to guidance...once you've reached a certain age, you feel like you know what you know, and it's you against the world. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- Aboriginal families, children and youth are under significant stress relating to poverty, lack of parenting skills and addictions.
- Aboriginal children and youth are making important contributions to their families and communities and are helping to revitalize Aboriginal culture in the city.
- Aboriginal culture is essential to positive identity formation, educational success, and personal development for Aboriginal children and youth.
- Aboriginal youth strongly value the First Nations school and the Native Learning Centre in meeting their cultural and educational needs.

4.1 Aboriginal Families, Children and Youth

Although not the focus of this chapter, it is difficult to discuss the experiences of Aboriginal children and youth in Toronto without first considering their families.

In their recent report on *Strategies to Address Child Welfare*, the Native Women's Association of Canada linked the decline of traditional family structures and the collective responsibility for childcare to the many manifestations of colonization, including the Indian Residential School system, the Sixties Scoop, the Indian Act and the loss of land and traditional activities. This report further outlines how this decline in traditional Aboriginal families has resulted in the prevalence of single parent families headed by women and the dramatic over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system.⁶⁰

More specifically in terms of Aboriginal families in Toronto, a recent (2006) study, *Struggling for Success: Aboriginal Family Units and the Effects of Poverty in the Greater Toronto Area*⁶¹ found a high number of Aboriginal families receiving welfare (55%), accessing food banks (76%) and accessing shelters (76%). The study further linked Aboriginal poverty and family stress to a series of inter-related and challenging factors whose social effects are often cyclical and inter-generational. The factors include, an unresolved trauma experienced either at residential schools or through Children's Aid involvement, depression, drug and alcohol addictions, poor self-esteem and identity confusion, and violent and abusive behaviour.⁶² Moreover, a recent study conducted by Native Child and Family Services found a series of structural impediments to Aboriginal families accessing municipal childcare supports, including extensive childcare subsidy waiting lists, unrealistic requirements for childcare subsidy approval and the high cost of transportation in accessing childcare services.⁶³

When asked what are the major causes of stress for Aboriginal children and youth, TARP community survey respondents indicated a series of similar factors, with poverty, lack of parenting skills, alcohol and drug abuse, difficulties at school and single parent families being the top five factors (Table 4A).

Table 4A Major Causes of Stress for Aboriginal Children and Youth

CAUSE OF STRESS (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Poverty	75.5	1
Lack of parenting skills	73.1	2
Alcohol and drug abuse	70.7	3
Difficulties at school	70.1	4
Single parent families	69	5
Negative peer influence	68.4	6
Lack of healthy relationships	68	7
Child welfare apprehension	65.4	8
Lack of access to Aboriginal culture	62.5	9
Identity uncertainty	65.2	10
Lack of recreational activities	63.8	11
Gang involvement	63.4	12

4.1.1 Poverty, Poor Parenting and Addiction:

In terms of poverty, the number one stressor on children and youth in Toronto, the 2006 Census found that approximately one-third (32%) of Aboriginal children (aged 14 years and under) in Toronto were living under the LICO, compared to 23% of non-Aboriginal children. Chart 4A, we see that 43% of Aboriginal youth earn less than \$10,000 per year, while another 26% earn between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

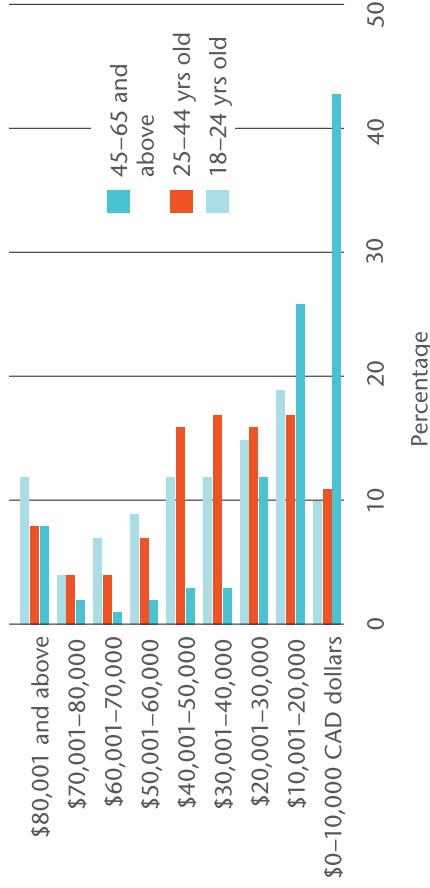
60 For further reading see 2007, Native Women's Association of Canada. *Strategies to Address Child Welfare: An Issue Paper* at <http://www.laa.gov.nl.ca/laa/news/pdf/nwac-childwelfare.pdf>.

61 For further reading, see the Native Women's Resource Centre, 2006. *Struggling for Success: Aboriginal Family Units and the Effects of Poverty in the Greater Toronto Area*.

62 *Ibid.*

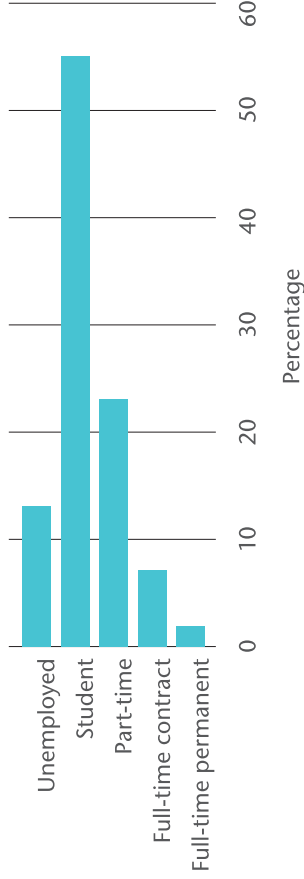
63 For further reading, see NCFST, 2011, *Little Voices Child and Family Centres: A Framework for the Delivery of Native Children's Services in the City of Toronto*.

Chart 4A: Income Distribution Across Age (Quantitative n=789)



Moreover, we see from Chart 4B that the majority of TARP Aboriginal youth respondents are either a student (55%) or unemployed (12%). Twenty-two percent (22%) of Aboriginal youth in Toronto have part-time jobs and only a small minority (9%) have either contract or permanent full-time employment.

Chart 4B: Aboriginal Youth Employment Status (Quantitative n=123)



TARP focus group and interview respondents also spoke to the many, inter-related stresses that Aboriginal children and youth face living in Toronto. When asked about 'the major challenges facing your clients today', a significant number of case study interview respondents (70%) spoke of 'multi-problem' cases where clients suffered from a

combination of challenges relating to intergenerational trauma and which most commonly include mental health problems and behavioural disorders, addictions and substance abuse, cultural loss and identity confusion. Some respondents (25%) spoke of the intense needs of their Aboriginal clients in terms of being both different in terms of having unique cultural needs and more challenging in that they have multiple social problems compared to what they had experienced working with non-Aboriginal clients in other mainstream organizations.

Our clients have significantly more serious issues than CAS clients, which increase the risk levels. We deal primarily with multi-problem families. (Native Child and Family Services, Case Study Interview)

Our clients have a real problem with addictions particularly crack cocaine. If there was no crack, there would be no kids in care...and of course these addictions relate closely to poverty, family violence, cultural loss and identity confusion, a social isolation. (Native Child and Family Services, Case Study Interview)

The big challenges for our clients is poverty, addictions, violence and low self-esteem. It is really tragic because they don't feel that they deserve the good things in life. (Native Child and Family Services, Case Study Interview)

In terms of poverty – the number one ranked stressor identified in the community survey – many of the respondents spoke of the 'growing poverty' which their clients experience and the daily stressors that this causes and which contributes to a loss of hope, low self-esteem, lack of parenting and family violence. One respondent, however, spoke of the resilience of her clients and the dedication that they have to live a better life and build healthy families:

Because of poverty, our kids have difficulty with motivation and feel really stuck in their situation. Poverty affects many aspects of their lives including poor social skills, depression, and feelings of hopelessness and despair. Often their families are isolated from the community. Poor parenting seems to relate to poverty, which means that kids are not prepared for weekend trips and that our phone calls are not returned or that appointments are missed. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group: Native Child and Family Services Toronto)

Being relatively new to the organization, I have been surprised by the depth of trauma and despair of many of our clients, but also at their resilience and strength in working to heal themselves and to get their kids back. (Native Child and Family Services, Case Study Interview)

Youth participants also pointed to the second most pressing stressor of lack of parenting skills in terms of the importance of rules and structure as well as the need to break the cycle of poor parenting and to not repeat the negative aspects of their own childhood nor that of their parents.

When I was younger, I had freedom. I was out 'til 1:30 am when I was 9 years old, just enjoying myself. I needed more structure. I was in a group home when I was 9 years old because I didn't have structure, and then when I was 11, I didn't have structure still, and went to another home...My mom told me she was raised like that too, she had freedom and she could do whatever she wanted. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

We need to think about how our parents were raised and to not follow the same way, but to break it, so it's not the same cycle...so it's not like you go to group homes because your mother did. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

If you were raised good, then take the advice of your family. But for people who were struggling when they were growing up, when they become a parent, they need to think 'well that life was hard', and they need to give their kids another life. They can't carry it on or else nothing will ever change. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

The number three stressor of alcohol and drugs abuse was discussed by respondents in terms of addictions leading to increasing gang involvement as well as being closely linked to family violence.

I think that it has to do with a lot of the adolescents that come into care have substance abuse issues, and they are getting involved with people to foster those addictions, because it allows you to get the money and the drugs and the alcohol, and you are involved over your head and you don't realize it. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

A lot of their families that come in to see the intake screener...a lot of the calls that we get and a lot of the children that come into care...number one is domestic violence, and coupled with substance abuse...rare to get sexual abuse...substance abuse is up there coupled with domestic violence. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

4.1.2 The Challenges of Special Needs

Many youth respondents also discussed the connection between learning disabilities, having difficulties at school and the lack of

support from the child welfare system. Youth in foster care experienced a number of intersecting and compounded issues in relation to their identity, education, employment, housing and the law. Youth expressed that Children's Aid did not provide adequate support for a learning disability throughout his early schooling, and detailed extensive disruptions to his education based on frequent shifts between group homes:

When I learned, I never learned properly. If you take the alphabet as generalizing learning then I learn 'abzghq', so there was no structure to it when I was young. They knew I had learning disabilities from the beginning, but because I was just another number they had to find a place to put me, not caring about my schooling, so eventually when I was 15 and I had to complete my schooling... because I had moved away from my group home, I tried going back to school, because I was no longer living at that group home, they kicked me out of school and I had no option except to go to work and there was no where I could live and go to school at the same time, so I was given no choice but to start working from that point on. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

I grew up in Children's Aid, in foster homes and group homes, more specifically the first foster home I lived in for 7 and half years, there was nothing in the foster home except anger and drama. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

4.1.3 Identity Challenges

Focus group respondents also spoke to the lack of cultural knowledge and uncertainty concerning one's Aboriginal identity as well as the internalization of racist attitudes and the challenge of negative thoughts of inferiority.

I work a lot with older men that have addictions and mental health issues and a majority are adults who don't really self-identify as Aboriginal, or who don't know anything about their culture or their community. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

Discrimination, negative perceptions of Aboriginal people by the Aboriginal society, and the internalized negative attitudes of youth were common themes throughout the Alternative High School Youth Focus Group. Youth responded at length on the perceptions of their own identities, and the perceptions of their identities by other youth. Internalized racism and stereotypes caused youth to question

legitimacy of their own identities as Aboriginal people. For instance, one youth commented on the authenticity of his identity based on his physical appearance:

Am I Native? How can I be?...I don't even look Native... (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group).

Other respondents spoke to both a sense of racialized negativity as well as the importance of role models:

When I walk down the street, the first thing I have in my head when I am looking at everybody, I think that I am below them. That is how I look at myself. They have nice clothes and everything...I see myself as below them. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

But honestly, who is to say that at Bay and Yonge, that a white person can and a Native person can't. It's that we don't push forward enough. We could be up there, we could be in those suits if we wanted to. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

4.1.4 Aboriginal Gang Involvement

And lastly, increasing youth gang activity in Toronto was identified as a stressor for Aboriginal children and youth in terms of the often-violent methods used by gang members to pressure youth into becoming members. As one respondent put it:

A lot of it has to do with the occurrence of gangs that originated from the western provinces like Manitoba. Our youth centres are a recruiting centre for a lot of these organizations. Young men are often bullied into associating with a lot of them. They are promised good financial gain, and it doesn't always work out, and some youth don't want to go with it, and they get beaten up, a lot of them. They won't admit to it, but you find out in subtle ways what really transpired, and who the individuals are that are doing most of the assaulting. We have a lot of swarming in the past year, where youth will come together in groups and attack an individual, even their own peers will get assaulted. Just last week, we had one individual who couldn't go out the front door because they were waiting for him outside the entrance, so we had to let him out the elevator, to go out the back stairs. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

Another respondent pointed to the experience of trauma within the home, the lack of parental protection and feelings of alienation and

isolation as important stressors that can lead children and youth to gang involvement:

I think that when people talk about becoming part of gangs, in terms of being attracted to it, they talk about it in a way where they are looking for community and protection. Often times when I talk with boys, maybe 12 or 13 years old, talk about it in a sense of needing to protect themselves. You will hear about a desire to get a gun, or to become part of a gang, or to take Tae Kwan Do, and all within the same type of conversation that tends to go along with some type of trauma that has happened in the home, where their parents haven't stepped be protectors. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

4.2 The Positive Contributions of Aboriginal Children and Youth

In addition to the many challenges that Aboriginal families, children and youth face living in Toronto, TARP focus group and interview participants also spoke of the important ways that children and youth contribute to the community.

Children are playing an important role in the process of strengthening the family structure. The lives of family members often become more stabilized after a child is born, grandmothers, aunts, uncles and other relations come together to help care for the child and are often there supporting a family through crisis, or in advocating for a child when parents are unable to do so. When a child is in need of protection and is apprehended, seeking a 'customary care' arrangement helps facilitate this process of extended family involvement as a form of traditional family roles and responsibilities.

The other thing that often others point out, is how having a child or baby was integral to what stabilized their lives, in terms of stopping drug use or stopping life on the street, or lifestyle choices that are generally not stable. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

I think the kids can bring the family together, like the birth, on a positive note. Even if they are apprehended, seeking out a customary care arrangement can wake up a family and bring it together. The grandparents and aunts and uncles have to intervene and when the kids are returned it strengthens family connections. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

It is through the behaviour and response of children to family problems, that entire families often seek support and assistance from social services. It was noted that youth could be misread as being the cause of family problems when they are instead a reflection of them.

Sometimes in counselling sessions, you'll hear stories about how children spoke out or acted out, and how they brought secret social problems that were happening in families to the forefront. They told someone, their neighbour. They are the ones that help their families to get the support that they need....they are that important link for families to community. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

Children and youth are also playing a role as cultural helpers and teachers within families, as they are often the ones that are exploring culture in various ways. Many respondents noted that children and youth are re-connecting with culture through a number of agency programs such as the Grundy Lake camp, attending First Nations School, seasonal ceremonies and picking up their drums through drum making workshops:

Youth are interested in cultural activities, sweat lodge and other cultural teachings. In doing that, the children are coming there much younger. Each time we do the ceremony, and it also reflected in the annual powwow that we have up in Dufferin Park, you can see more young people participating in the traditional style dancing, jingle dress and fancy shawl. Also I see a lot of children who have their own drums now, because of former employees like Steve Teekens who helped with different programs to create these hand drums. Many of the head start programs have these drums, and many of them have their own drums and have been to a few ceremonies where they initiated the drums. We have a drum group that comes quite frequently to our ceremonies, and they're a children's drum for the First Nations school. That is where I see positive attitudes from young people. The more and earlier we get to them and share with them the different teachings, the more we can help them. It is very positive. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

Many of the youth have gone through the programs from Native Child, Native Women's Resource Centre, Council Fire, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, and they have spent time with Elders as traditional healers and counsellors. They have learned about pre-natal care, mothering and nurturing and, even though we once considered them to be wayward when they were younger, they have become good parents and people and are doing extremely well and they now support these programs. The youth are now carrying on the teachings and helping others to learn them. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

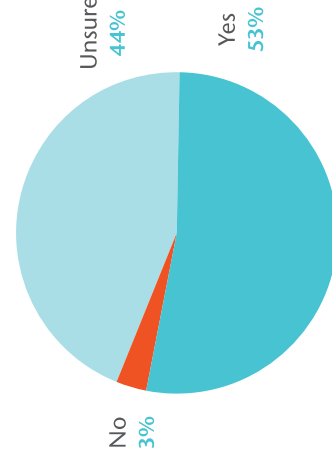
The youth identified their positive contributions as working with Elders and participating in cultural activities organized by a variety of Aboriginal organizations such as the Native Women's Resource Centre, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Council Fire, the Native Canadian Centre, and Native Child and Family Services Toronto.

We are powwow dancing and drumming, going to full moon ceremonies, helping Elders and cooking for them, fire keeping, helping with Street Patrol... (Alternatives High Schools Youth Focus Group)

4.3 Gaps in Children and Youth Services and the Paths to Success

In Chart 4C, we see that a majority (53%) of community survey respondents felt that there were gaps in services to Aboriginal children and youth living in Toronto, with only 3% of respondents indicating there was not. Importantly, 44% of respondents were unsure, which suggests significant uncertainty as to what children and youth services are presently available and/or what services should be available.

Chart 4C: Gaps in Services to Children and Youth (Qualitative n=499)



When asked about the major contributors of success for Aboriginal children and youth, TARP community survey respondents indicated a series of factors with a positive educational experience, a positive sense of self, positive role models, family supports, and access to Aboriginal culture being the top five contributors (Table 4B).

Table 4B Contributors of Success for Aboriginal Children and Youth

CONTRIBUTOR OF SUCCESS (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Positive educational experience	83	1
Positive sense of self	83	2
Positive role models	81	3
Aboriginal family support	77	4
Access to Aboriginal culture	74	5
Positive peer influence	73	6
Recreation facilities	66	7
Part-time employment	59	8

TARP focus group interview respondents also spoke to the gaps in services and the many, inter-related contributors to success for Aboriginal children and youth living in Toronto.

4.3.1 Educational Success

In terms of the importance of positive educational experiences as the number one contributor to success, the recently completed (2008) Native Child and Family Services Toronto Aboriginal Youth Strategy highlighted the need for Aboriginal culturally specific programs in the school system, including substantial changes to mainstream curriculum to reflect Aboriginal cultural realities and the desire for language immersion programs.⁶⁴ In addition, the 2004 report, *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation* identified the importance of alternative forms of education for Aboriginal youth that focus on cultural learning and identity supports.⁶⁵

Many TARP youth respondents pointed to the value of the Native Learning Centre and the First Nations School and the hope for more

schools in Toronto with an Aboriginal focus, including an Aboriginal high school similar to the Afro-centric schooling initiatives that are presently underway.

Youth expressed pride to be students at the Native Learning Centre and suggested that more teachers and teachers' assistants should be available within the classroom.

Youth further felt that it would be beneficial to have more Aboriginal teachers within the school system generally, as well as teachers who are in touch with the needs of Aboriginal children. As well, several respondents spoke of the need for Indigenous language immersion within the schools as an important gap in courses offered:

It would be better to lengthening the time frame of language classes and making the language a part of credit which is received upon graduating...there is not enough emphasis on that. I think having more schools like First Nations schools where they have teachers who actually converse in the language. Alex McKay where one who used to go there and have circles, and who would converse in the language, and the children would see this and say 'Hey.. I know what you said' (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

The First Nations School was identified as important and needed by participants. First Nations School is one of the few culturally specific educational institutions available in Toronto. As one participant stated:

Another school for younger kids like us, we're already in school. But the First Nations School is a perfect example. Like how they are, you know. We should have more schools like that. There is only one Aboriginal elementary school. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

One participant spoke of the role the school played in bringing families and community together for the kids:

I used to go to First Nations School and every Thursday we would have a circle with the Native students would have a circle in the hallways, and that made a sense of community because all the parents and students and teachers came together and the kids and the students were actually talking like that, and the kids had something. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

64 The Native Child and Family Services Toronto Aboriginal Youth Strategy was based upon a two-day conference in February of 2008 and included consultation with 100 Aboriginal youth living in Toronto.

65 Marlene Finn and Associates, (2004). *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation: Final Report*.

4.3.2 Culture and Identity

Several focus group respondents spoke to a positive sense of self (identified above in Chart 4B as the third most important contributor of success) in terms of accessing cultural teachings and practices (the fifth ranked contributor of success) in helping to define one's individual and cultural identity in positive ways. As well, one respondent referred to the value of Elders as role models (the third ranked contributor of success) for Aboriginal children and youth in relation to an Elder's ability to affirm their cultural identity, while guiding them along a path of knowledge and personal growth and development. The importance of cultural teaching to the success of Aboriginal youth was also identified in the 2008 Aboriginal Youth Strategy where it was agreed that Aboriginal cultures continue to be neglected in Toronto and that they need to be made a priority for youth programming.⁶⁶

TARP respondents spoke of the impacts of colonization and internalized racism as having very harmful effects on their sense of self and the critical importance of Aboriginal cultural knowledge in helping them to rebuild themselves and to re-connect with their families and communities in self-affirming ways.

I do believe that a lot of success has to do with culture and traditional teachings, about the roles of women and men, and trying to teach the child that they are a gift from Creator. Because of the loss of identity from colonization and residential schools... what I find is that we are trying to articulate who they are as a people. That comes through a variety of different ways and it comes through in creative ways. In Aboriginal children, I really find that deep rooted teachings are being passed on through their communities and/or their families, or agencies such as ours. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

What can be more important than feeling good about being Aboriginal...feeling pride about the culture and teaching other children and youth about their culture. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

When I go to SkyDome powwow, I see a lot of Canadian people visiting and they were talking about it. They were saying 'wow that is like amazing!' expressing to other people how appreciative they are of what we have. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

I love the different organization's powwows like Dufferin Park and Na-Me-Res am proud to go there. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

I am a jingle dress dancer; that makes me proud to say 'I am Native and I dance in a jingle dress', that's me! It makes me feel good to see all these other women out there just doing their thing. (Alternative High Schools Youth Focus Group)

As a young kid I got in a lot of trouble because I didn't learn respect and consideration from other people. Often as youth, we are looking at the other kids who are always wanting to cause fights and always up to no good. It was only when I sat down with the Elders, and I actually became aware of what respect, humility and consideration for others was, that I actually began to take this into practice. So often I see youth today without that guidance, more or less, you look at a kid, and you see him getting into trouble, and they automatically label him as having behavioural problems, or he is being rebellious, and so forth. Instead, you kids need to pair up with Elders and be their helpers because the younger kids are more open to guidance...once you've reached a certain age, you feel like you know what you know, and it's you against the world. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Although having access to Aboriginal culture was considered an important contributor to success for Aboriginal children and youth when asked to identify their common activities, community support respondents ranked Aboriginal cultural events and spending time with Elders as significantly less prevalent than being online, playing video games, spending time with friends and watching TV (see Table 4C)

Table 4C Common Activities of Aboriginal Youth in Toronto

ACTIVITIES (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY FREQUENTLY'	RANK
Accessing Internet	66.7	1
Playing video games	63.6	2
Spending time with friends	57.6	3
Watching TV	55.8	4
General social activities	26.2	5
Playing sports	22.8	6
Aboriginal cultural events	21.1	7
Spending time with Elders	16.5	8

66 The Native Child and Family Services Toronto Aboriginal Youth Strategy, 2008.

These contrasting findings therefore suggest the recognition of the importance of culture, but not necessarily something that is integrated into daily life or perhaps a lack of opportunities for Aboriginal youth to access cultural practices.

4.3.3 Employment

In terms of employment as a contributor of success for youth, many respondents spoke of the value of Aboriginal agency employment programs such as the life skills program at Native Child and Family Services or employment services at Miziwe Biik that provide both employment skills training as well as direct access to employment.

The Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training program delivered a six-month Skills Link program targeted to Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 30 from September, 2010 to March, 2011. The program was designed to ensure that 15 Aboriginal participants gained the skills, knowledge and work experience to become employed on a full-time basis. More specifically, employment counsellors delivered courses in a wide range of professional and personal skills development areas including communication skills, stress management, career planning, budgeting, networking and self-marketing, conflict resolution and traditional teachings.

Several TARP youth respondents expressed a need for more programs such as the Miziwe Biik 'Skills Link' and stated that many existing programs were focused more on providing for the immediate needs of 'at-risk' youth, rather than assisting youth who are more socially stable. Youth suggested more programs supportive of their transition needs to college or university or into an area of career interest.

More programs oriented toward career development. There are very little programs that help youth move toward more of a successful career. There are more programs I see geared towards helping youth who are in trouble. So even though there is a program that is running for six months, it's not like the program is really developed to allow the youth to have a career in society. It will supply their needs for what they need at that moment, but for the future, it will not allow youth to take from that, and use it to build a career. There is more programming available for youth at risk than for people who are better off and wanting the help to continue their way. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

More job placement programs would be good, stuff that will lead you more in career that you want to go into when you are finished. So you know where you're going, for sure. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

The wages of the employment programs do not allow youth to be a provider for a family, or for more than one person. One participant stated that some programs provide an income of only \$4,000 per year, which was perceived as a barrier to their possible success:

Becoming a parent definitely doesn't fit along the lines of saving money. The wage we get just kind of covers ourselves and what we need. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Three additional considerations raised by TARP focus group and interview respondents that are not identified in the community survey (Table 4B), but which may be considered as both gaps in service as well as possible suggestions towards success are the need for better coordination and communication of programs and services, better housing, and the need for a sense of community and collective Aboriginal governance in Toronto

4.3.4 Aboriginal Agency Communication and Cooperation

Although living within the Toronto urban Aboriginal community, youth indicated that they were often not aware of the many opportunities within organizations that were available to them. For example, youth focus group participants accessing services at Native Child and Family Services Toronto where not aware of related programs offered through other agencies such as the Native Canadian Centre. One youth commented that he felt most youth did not know they could go to see a healer or an Elder at Anishnawbe Health Toronto. TARP youth respondents suggested more effective outreach and communication methods for connecting them to the many agencies in Toronto.

Each organization has their own hub of youth and staff and programming, you don't see the network between them. It's not like 'you have this program and I have this program and let's combine and work together'...sometimes you will find that there are two programs at the exact same time and you can't make it to both of them. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Anishnawbe Health Toronto offers various different Elders, activities and programming regularly. There are sweats usually there. They will take you out fasting in the spring and fall. There is the shaking tent ceremony over at Gerrard, but unless you are aware of it, and I am because I am on the Youth Council, but even the youth who are constantly in the Native community, they don't even know what is happening. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

I bring that back to networking...I don't know if anyone is aware, but the Native Canadian Centre holds socials and they have a lot of programming. But being here at Native Child, they do not promote what happens at the Native Canadian Centre and unless you talk with the youth who attend the Native Canadian Centre...then you will not be aware that they have socials, they have regalia making and language classes also. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

In the 2004 *All Voices Heard* report, youth suggested improving agency communication and cooperation through radio programming and a centralized website for posting events and to communicate with online chatting, etc.⁶⁷

4.3.5 Aboriginal Housing Needs

Youth further expressed that the wages earned within employment programs were insufficient to afford adequate housing. Youth indicated that, generally housing was also inadequate in terms of remote locations, long waiting lists and the generally poor quality of the rooms and buildings. Housing arrangements of youth are diverse and relatively unstable with a significant proportion (46%) renting apartments or condos, 20% staying with friends or family and 12% renting a room in a house.

Some youth accessed housing through the shelter system. One agency, South House, was mentioned as being ideal as it provided youth with a sense of independence and privacy and included a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Within the context of the shelter system, this type of accommodation was seen as very helpful as it allowed youth to have some autonomy, while also accounting for their low income. One youth suggested housing could be developed for Elders and community members and could include a diversity of services on site:

My housing situation is so bad. The house is so bad. It's run down. When I ask the landlord to come to fix something it ends up taking months. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Wigwamen, most of the open locations are available at Seawells road, way out in the middle of nowhere, and it takes over an hour to get to downtown. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

The money that I make and the rent that I have to pay don't add up and I end up without a place. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

For me, I moved back here in November and not having the funds saved for first and last, I was restricted to staying on couches and stuff. So I put in five or six applications for housing, and when I got to South House, they had four people out, so there was a space available right away. It is basic...everything you need...a bed, a sink, and then closets, like a bachelor, share kitchens and bathrooms...and you need to be sufficient by yourself. Anything else from there, you look at, say you wanted to upgrade, say me and my partner wanted to upgrade...we would have gone on a bunch of waiting lists again...because she is not working, and the amount of money I make here is not nearly enough to get a decent two bedroom, or even one bedroom anywhere in this city. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

Like I don't understand why they haven't created a 20-storey apartment building with cultural programming...they just did this whole residential schools settlement and I don't know why 50 of the Elders didn't go 'let's create some place where we can live on a consistent basis', and then have the services there. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

4.3.6 Community and Governance

And lastly, several TARP respondents articulated the desire for a better sense of community and collective Aboriginal governance in relation to the lack of a central space or building for Aboriginal people in Toronto. Respondents spoke of Aboriginal people and agencies being scattered and isolated throughout the city without a collective sense of identity or common purpose and long-term visions.

We have 60,000 First Nations people in the city, but everyone is scattered across the board. We don't have areas or communities. There is little India, little Chiricahua, little Africa, there are all these communities inside the city and people can go to them because they know they can find their people there, but Native agencies, they are all scattered. As First Nations people walking down the street, you don't know where to go. There is not a community that has been set up where you can go

67 For further reading see Marlene Finn and Associates, (2004). *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation: Final Report*.

Chapter 5

ABORIGINAL MEN

you can have an idea where the First Nations people are. They are everywhere and just scattered. We don't have a community strong hold where we can go and reflect, and where we can go and be a part of. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

It's not like we have a community. We have it like everybody is on their own. It's the same thing with the agencies, everybody is on their own, trying to do their own thing. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

We can take 500 youth in one place and then they can take 500 youth there and we can create programming for what they will need right now instead of thinking about the whole and providing them with opportunities for the future. (At-Risk Youth Focus Group)

It would be nice to establish a Native community in Toronto and to develop or build a kind of a council or confederacy where youth have a say...kind of like our own Band Council. (Aboriginal Children and Youth Focus Group)

The importance of community building and the need for a collective governance process that includes the voices and aspirations of Aboriginal Youth was also identified in the 2008 Aboriginal Youth Strategy where it was suggested that a Toronto Aboriginal Youth Council be formed and that youth seek to better participate in the development of their own programs and services.⁶⁸

We have a lot of talented people in our community and important traditional knowledge. But we are contributing less and less and we focus on the negative and get stuck there. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- Aboriginal men in Toronto are experiencing significant successes in educational attainment, employment and income. However, a majority continue to experience significant poverty and related social problems.
- In relation to Aboriginal women and two-spirited community members, Aboriginal men have the lowest incomes, educational attainment rates, least job security and are the least likely to own a home.
- Aboriginal men are most likely to work in construction or the trades, followed by professional/managerial positions.
- A significant number of Aboriginal men are experiencing relationship and addictions challenges.
- Aboriginal men identified racism and discrimination as an important barrier to their success.
- There is a need for additional services to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal men in Toronto.

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key topics that are important to Aboriginal men living in Toronto. In addition to findings from the community survey and key informant interviews, this chapter includes the results from one focus group as well as five life histories.

68 The Native Child and Family Services Toronto Aboriginal Youth Strategy, 2008.

Aboriginal men account for a minority (39%) of the TARP community survey and key informant interview respondents. They come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and communities and are involved in many areas across the Toronto Aboriginal community. Although a small number of Aboriginal men in Toronto are achieving a degree of economic, employment and educational success, a significant number are struggling with poverty and related challenges such as addictions, low educational attainment, inadequate housing, unemployment and racism and for some, the challenges of being single fathers. As well, the many professional roles that Aboriginal men play within the community are discussed as are the influences that have contributed to their success. And lastly, this chapter points to the prevailing gaps in services to Aboriginal men in Toronto and provides suggestions for improvement.

5.1 Aboriginal Men: Education and Income

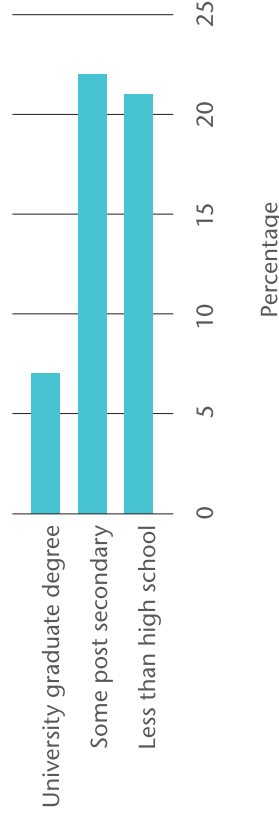
As previously mentioned in Chapter 3: Demographics and Mobility, Aboriginal residents have made significant advancements over the years in the areas of education, income and employment. Although Aboriginal men in Toronto are experiencing some economic and educational success in keeping with these advancements, they are generally earning less and leaving schools earlier than their female and two-spirit counterparts.

According to the 2006 Census, Aboriginal men living in Toronto are less likely to earn a university degree than Aboriginal women. One in four (26%) Aboriginal women aged 25 to 34 reported having a university degree in the 2006 Census, compared to 15% of their male counterparts.

As indicated in the Demographics and Mobility chapter (Chart 3Q), TARP data points to similar education results and further illustrates that Aboriginal men respondents are also more likely to not have finished high school (21%) or have a high school diploma (23%) than Aboriginal women or two-spirit respondents.

A majority (66%) of TARP Aboriginal men respondents reported having completed a post secondary degree or diploma, having either attained some post secondary (22%), completed high school (23%) having not completed high school (21%). Thirty four percent (34%) have however, attained a post secondary education, with 17% having attained a college diploma, 10% an undergraduate university degree and 7% having completed a university graduate degree.

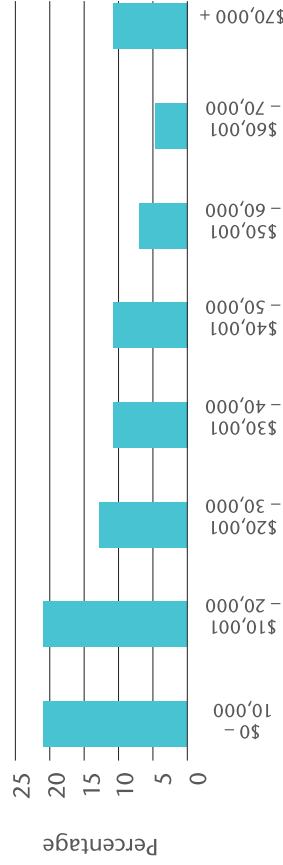
Chart 5A: Aboriginal Men Educational Attainment (Quantitative n=313)



According to the TARP findings, Aboriginal men are earning less than Aboriginal women and two-spirit respondents. As previously illustrated in Chart 3M within the Demographics and Mobility chapter, Aboriginal men trail behind Aboriginal women within all income categories above \$20,000. As well, Chart 3M shows that Aboriginal men occupy the highest percentage (22%) of those earning less than \$10,000 per year.

From Chart 5B we see that the majority (66%) of Aboriginal men earn less than \$40,000 per year, with 42% and 21% earning less than \$20,000 and \$10,000 per year respectively.

Chart 5B: Aboriginal Men Household Income (Quantitative n=253)



As well, a high percentage (57%) of Aboriginal men key informant interview respondents indicated having experienced poverty as a child, while 36% of these same respondents reported that they had been on social assistance at one time in their lives. Also, a significant percentage (32%) of Aboriginal men respondents indicated that they had accessed poverty prevention services in the past five years (such as food banks).

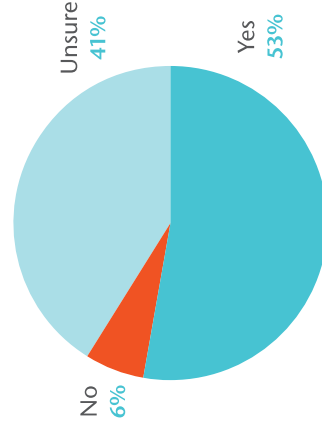
5.2 Aboriginal Men: Roles and Employment Status

When asked if there are particular roles for Aboriginal men living in Toronto, a significant number of community survey respondents (53%) said that there were. A number of key informant interview respondents spoke of the prominent positions that Aboriginal women were taking in community organizations, but that men continued to play important leadership roles. Others commented that Aboriginal men have the important role of being providers, parents and husbands and need to model good behaviour for youth as a fulfillment of their traditional roles:

It is women you see doing a lot of volunteering and working in community organizations, but it is often men who continue to have the higher positions and lead the agencies. (Key Informant Interview)

Traditionally, Aboriginal men were the family providers and the ones that taught the young ones the culture taught to them by the Elders. (Key Informant Interview)

Chart 5C: Particular Roles for Aboriginal Men in Toronto (Quantitative n=513)



TARP Aboriginal men's focus group respondents spoke as well to traditional roles of Aboriginal men as providers and protectors the importance of transferring traditional knowledge, but they spoke to the diminishment of these roles as many Aboriginal men struggle with social problems in Toronto and as Aboriginal women increasing take over their roles.

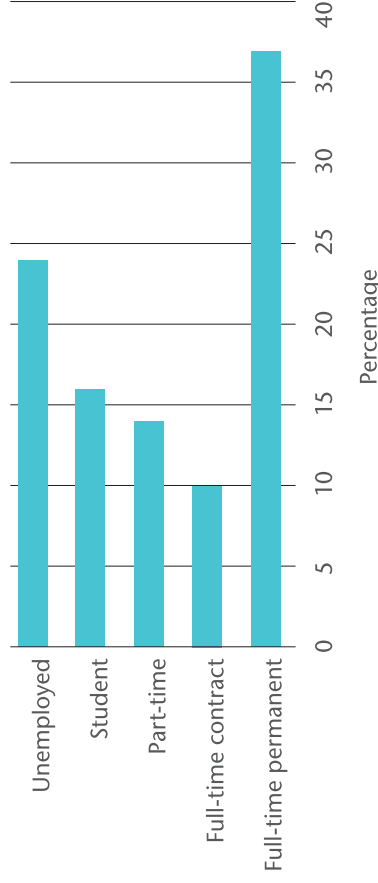
Traditionally Aboriginal men had the role of provider and protector, but a lot of women are taking on these roles and looking for relationships with other races. Women want men who are clean and sober...if we are home drinking all day, is not good for our children to see. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

We have a lot of talented people in our community and important traditional knowledge. But we are contributing less and less and we focus on the negative get stuck there. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

In terms of employment status, Aboriginal men are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be employed in full-time positions than the overall Aboriginal population in Toronto. In Chart 5D, we see a percentage of unemployment for Aboriginal men in Toronto that, at 24%, is 6% higher than the overall rate of 18% experienced by TARP respondents generally. Moreover, at 47%, the proportion of Aboriginal men that have secured full-time permanent or contract positions is somewhat lower than the 52% reported for TARP respondents generally.⁶⁹

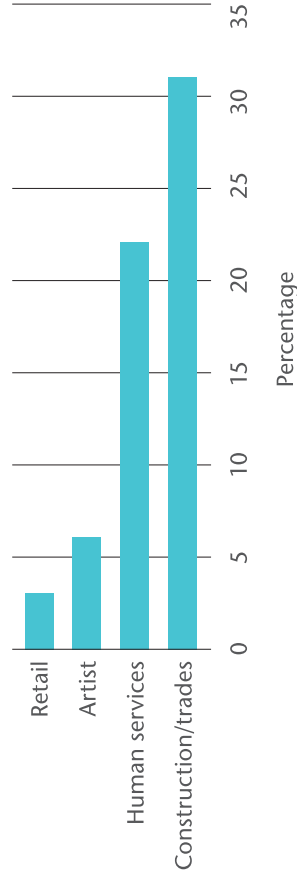
⁶⁹ See Chapter 3 on Demographics and Mobility, Chart 3N for more detail on general employment status for Aboriginal residents in Toronto.

Chart 5D: Employment Status for Aboriginal Men (Quantitative n=269)



In terms of specific occupation types, Chart 5E illustrates that the top three sectors where Aboriginal men are working in Toronto are in construction/trades (31%), professional/managerial (24%) and human services (22%). These findings are notably different than for Aboriginal women who are more highly represented in the professional/managerial sector (38%), followed by the human services (17%), and the service industry (13%).⁷⁰ These distinctions in occupation type between Aboriginal men and women living in Toronto, when considered in relations to the general nature of these employment categories, helps to explain why (in addition to having higher rates of unemployment) men have lower income levels and less job security than do Aboriginal women.

Chart 5E: Aboriginal Men and Occupational Type (Quantitative n=155)



5.3 Major Contributors of Success for Aboriginal Men in Toronto

In terms of the top five major contributors to success for Aboriginal men in Toronto, a significant number (77%) of TARP community survey and key informant interview respondents pointed to educational advancement as the most important. This was followed by having stable employment (76%), a stable family life (74%), a successful healing journey (66%) and access to Aboriginal culture (66%).

Table 5A: Major Contributors to Success for Aboriginal Men in Toronto

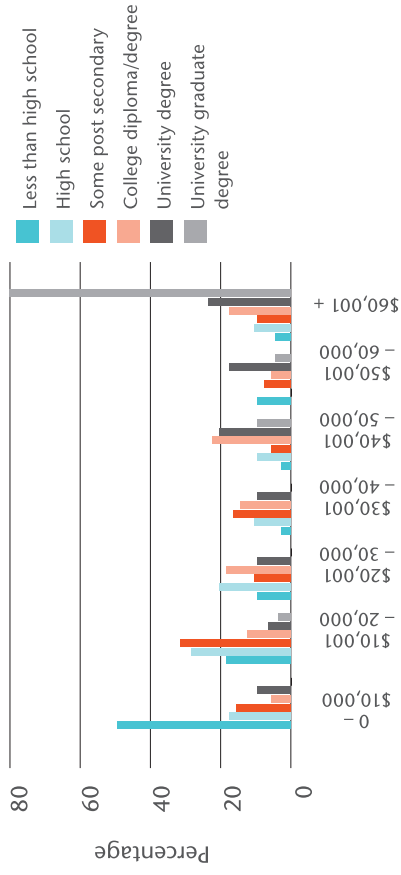
MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO SUCCESS (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Educational advancement	77	1
Stable employment	76	2
Stable family life	74	3
Successful healing journey	66	4
Access to Aboriginal culture	64	5
Guidance from Aboriginal role models	64	6
Informal peer/family support	62	7
Social housing and men's shelters	61	8
Access to crisis intervention services	61	9

It is interesting to note that the top two contributing factors to success of Aboriginal men in Toronto of educational advancement and stable employment relate directly to factors of economic success. Chart 5F clearly illustrates that Aboriginal men with university degrees and college diplomas are much more likely to be earning \$40,000 and above. Of particular importance is the effect that attaining a graduate degree can have on income potential; of those Aboriginal men with a university graduate degree, an overwhelming majority (88%) are earning \$60,000 per year and above. Conversely, those Aboriginal men that have not completed a post secondary diploma or degree

70 See Chapter 6 on Aboriginal Women, Chart 6B for more detail on women's occupation categories in Toronto.

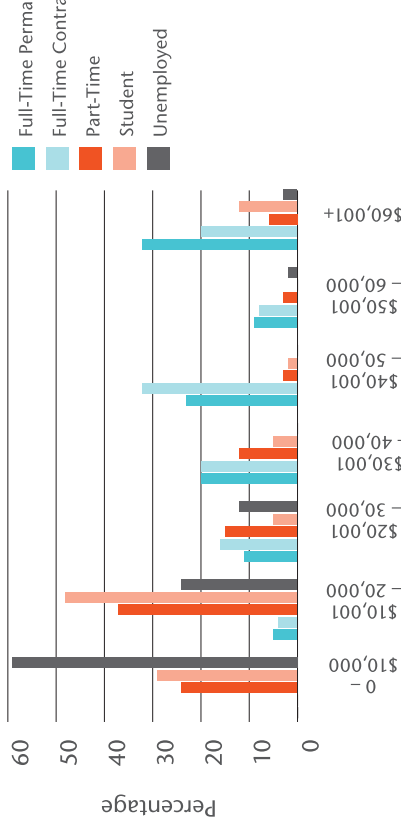
much more likely to be earning less than \$20,000 per year and of those Aboriginal men that have not attained a high school degree, 50% are living in poverty and earning less than \$10,000 per year.

Chart 5F: Aboriginal Men Educational Attainment vs. Total Household Income (Quantitative n=294)



The second major contributor to the success of Aboriginal men in Toronto of stable employment also has a direct relationship to income levels. Chart 5G clearly illustrates that Aboriginal men with full-time permanent or contract positions are much more likely to be earning \$40,000 and above. Of those Aboriginal men with full-time employment, 52% are making \$60,000 per year and above. Conversely, those Aboriginal men who are earning \$10,000 or less are much more likely to be part-time employees (24%), students (29%) and unemployed (59%).

Chart 5G: Aboriginal Men: Employment Status vs. Total Household Income (Quantitative n=255)



Aboriginal men’s focus group and key informant interview respondents also spoke to the importance of education and meaningful employment as essential to their success. As one respondent put it:

Having a good education and being able to do what you love in your work is a good measure of success, but this of course is very hard to do....affirmative action can be helpful, but there needs to be more awareness of this. (Aboriginal Men Focus Group)

What defines success for Aboriginal men is having a job, a decent salary, housing etc...but in Toronto you really need two jobs to just get by. I had all those things and then I lost them. (Aboriginal Men’s Focus Group)

Education is an important contributor to success yes...and has the potential to solve most problems. Without it you can’t really get anywhere in life. (Key Informant Interview)

With the majority (58%) of Aboriginal men respondents indicating that they are single (33% being married/common law, and 10% being divorced or separated), having a stable family life was identified as TARP respondents as being the third most important contributor to success for Aboriginal men living in Toronto. As one life history respondent put it:

I was lucky because my parents showed me the possibilities of living well. They brought me to Toronto when I was very young and they were very supportive and set me on a good path. They had a lot of love for me. (Life History Respondent)

Many respondents, however, spoke of the importance of having a stable and loving family life in terms of not having one and the hardships that this can cause. As well, respondents pointed to the lack of relationship skills, the effects of alcohol and drug addictions, and the legacy of the residential schools as some of the main causes of family breakdown and instability.

I have so much anger inside of me and it all comes out when I am drinking...there is no way that I can be in a good relationship...it always falls apart. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

I think that an important challenge for Aboriginal men is the lack of education and the lack of relationship skills...this is a real struggle for me and it really keeps me down. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Both my parents went to residential school and I grew up with a lot of drinking and abuse in the house and when I drink now I am the same way with my girlfriends. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

I used to be in a treatment program 'Pedahbun Lodge' that was excellent in bringing women and men together there as part of that program to discuss their differences and reasons for arguments...it was very helpful in looking at issues of abuse and violence in relationships. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

One life history respondent recounted his difficult relationship experiences with women that ended because of violence and the abuse of alcohol and which led to involvement with the criminal justice system:

As I was growing up, I didn't know how to act around girls and so I was always single and I never dated in my whole life. When I had kids, I had them to worry about...so being single didn't bother me. All of my relationships have been about alcohol. They have never worked out.... One girl that I was with helped me get off alcohol and then when we both started drinking again we lost our kids. I have a really short temper and I hit this one girl a few different times and she went back to her boyfriend and I went to jail and then I was in and out of jail for stupid stuff. My last two girlfriends cheated on me. I have always had a hard time trusting women. (Life History Respondents)

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3 (Chart 3G), a minority (16%) of Aboriginal men are also single parents. In terms of the importance

of family stability, several Aboriginal men's focus group respondents pointed to the general lack of support for single fathers and the discrimination that they face as single fathers from the Children's Aid Society.

The CAS is harassing our people. As a single parent and father the CAS has contributed to my downfall. There was a time that I could have used a short break, maybe for a weekend, but they ended up taking my kids from me. All agencies, even Native ones, are biased against single dads. They are very mor focused. I don't trust any agency today. Now I just say no to the CAS. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

One life history respondent however, spoke of the stress the he experienced as a single father raising his children in Toronto. He discussed how the stress of being a single father eventually led to drug use, instability and having to arrange for his children to live with his brother and sister in-law:

I was in a rocky relationship for about six years and we had two kids. After we broke up, my ex ended up losing them due to her addictions and then I took them and raised them for seven years on my own. But my own addictions got the best of me and they are in a good place at the moment, but my plan is to eventually get them back. (Life History Respondent)

Having a stable family life also relates closely to having access to stable and affordable housing. As one key informant interview respondent put it:

Having a good home and home life provides that foundation for everything else. Social housing can be okay... it is important for Native men to have places that they can afford. (Key Informant Interview Respondent)

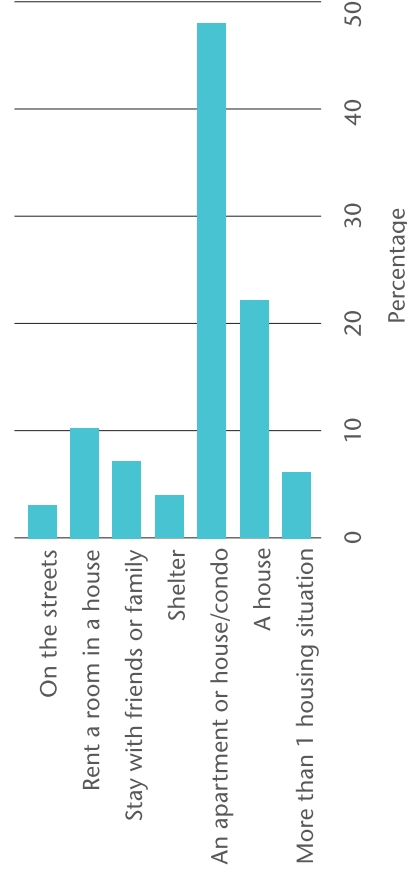
Home ownership is also a marker of family stability. In terms of Aboriginal home ownership in Toronto, the TARP community survey results point to two important findings:

- Of those Aboriginal people that own homes in Toronto, 73% are women and only 26% are men.
- Of all the Aboriginal men community survey respondents, only 15% reported owning their homes.

In spite of these low rates of home ownership for Aboriginal men living in Toronto, the majority (77%) nonetheless considered their present

housing situation to be stable. In terms of their housing status, Chart 5H shows us that Aboriginal men primarily (48%) rent apartments, condominium or houses. A minority of men (10%) are renting a room in a house, while 6% have more than one housing situation such as staying with family, friends or a shelter.

Chart 5H: Housing Status for Aboriginal Men (Quantitative n=305)



As contributors to the success of Aboriginal men in Toronto, the fourth most important factor of having a successful healing journey and the fifth most important of having access to Aboriginal culture shown in Table 5A are inter-related for many TARP respondents. One male life history respondent attributes his ability to overcome his addictions, stabilize his life and achieve economic success to his cultural teachings and participation in ceremony. According to this respondent, healing from past trauma and the addictions that are often associated with attempting to cope with that experience is directly tied to spirituality. Spirituality facilitates the healing and the moving on with one's life through the situating of one's identity within family, community and nation:

That is what I see now more than anything is the ill effect because they carry on and on. I look at people struggling and I see why. My parents were involved in alcohol and now I understand why. Now that I have that understanding, I can't blame them. How can you blame someone for something that is not his or her

fault? Because they took all of our ceremonies away from us, how could we heal ourselves? When we smudge, we are purifying ourselves. When you offer tobacco you are requesting to heal yourself. You use cedar to cleanse yourself. All these things we were given, Anishnawbe, you don't heal as one, but as a community that's what has to take place. Our communities are getting stronger now, I can see it. Many people are still lost, those who were involved in the 60s scoop or those who were removed before that when it was a sin to be an Indian. They are asking for the way to that road, to come back. They are healing. (Life History Participant)

A TARP Aboriginal men's focus group respondent also spoke to the importance of having access to Aboriginal culture as key to having strong identity in relation to how one contributes to the community:

Success is to be in touch with oneself. It is to know who you are and where you come from. It is to have knowledge of the teachings and ceremonies and to find out what Creator has in mind for you...your place within society. I try to instill this in my son and to help him not be ashamed of where he has come from. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

As well, one key informant interview respondent linked the experience of personal success to Aboriginal cultural engagement:

It is always the same....those who are successful are that way because they have balanced themselves culturally. (Key Informant Interview)

5.4 Barriers to Success for Aboriginal Men in Toronto

Table 5B Barriers to Success for Aboriginal Men in Toronto

MAJOR BARRIERS TO SUCCESS (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Lack of employment opportunities	69	1
Lack of long-term addictions services	63	2
Few transition prgms. (prison to community)	60	3
Inadequate mental health services	59	4
Lack of long-term social support programs	58	5
Lack of relationship support services	58	6
Lack of social services specific to men	58	6

MAJOR BARRIERS TO SUCCESS (N=623, QUANTITATIVE)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Lack of social housing for men	58	6
Lack of recreational facilities	56	7
Lack of legal support services	54	8

In Table 5B, we see that TARP community survey respondents further ranked the prevailing barriers to success for Aboriginal men in Toronto. In terms of factors such as employment, difficulties with relationships and addictions, and social supports we see a relationship between contributors and barriers to success for Aboriginal men. For example, access to stable employment is ranked as the number two contributor for success in Table 5A, while the lack of employment opportunities is considered the number one barrier in Table 5B.

The second most important barrier to success for Aboriginal men living in Toronto is the lack of long-term addiction services. Addictions were discussed above in terms of their negative affect on family stability and reference was made to the closing of the Pedahbun Lodge as a place where men and women could come together for counselling as part of an addictions recovery treatment. In terms of long-term treatment, another Aboriginal men's focus group respondent noted that, in the absence of the Pedahbun Lodge, present addictions programs are ineffective, as they do not allow enough time for recovery:

We need longer treatment programs. Right now I can only get treatment for a 30-day period. There used to be a treatment program 'Pedahbun Lodge' that was excellent but it has been closed. Treatment could last anywhere from four months to two years and it would help to address issues of spousal abuse and other harmful behaviours. That program helped a lot of people who went on to be successful. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

From Table 5B we see that the additional barriers to success for Aboriginal men living in Toronto that were identified as being very important in the TARP community survey include the need for more prison to community transition programs (60%), mental health

services (59%) and overall social support, including relationship (58%), housing (58%), recreation (56%) and legal supports (54%) In relation to the barriers to success, a significant proportion (42% of community survey respondents indicated that the needs of Aboriginal men in Toronto were being neglected. In terms of the gaps in services, a number of Aboriginal men community survey respondents spoke of the need for addictions treatment, mental health services enhanced housing services.

We need a residential detox facility as well as a drop-in and housing centre for mental health patients. (Community Survey Respondent)

We need more Aboriginal mental health care professionals that are grounded in their cultural, healing practices as well. (Community Survey Respondent)

Housing services are just not adequate...we need more transitional housing as well as permanent homes in central locations. Housing people in the boonies means that there is no fallback for soup kitchens and other services. If you are down on your knees there are services for you, but if you live in east Scarborough then there aren't services. (Community Survey Respondent)

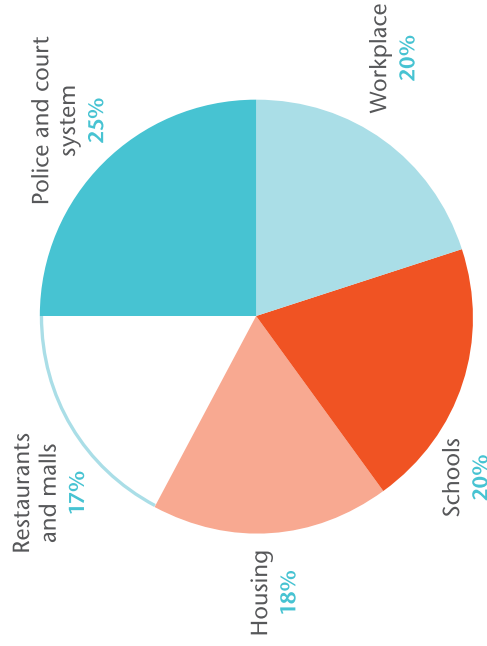
One focus group respondent also spoke of difficulty in accessing services on the weekends and after hours during the week:

Life on the streets doesn't stop on the weekend. We need to better access services there are very little services on the weekends or from 5:30pm to 8:30am and that is a problem. (Aboriginal Men Focus Group)

5.5 Aboriginal Men and Discrimination

An additional barrier to success that was not raised in Table 5B, which was raised in response to other questions in the community survey and men's focus group, was that of discrimination and injustice. A majority (58%) of Aboriginal men considered racism non-Aboriginal people to be a problem in Toronto and indicated that it is prevalent in a diversity of systemic and institutional contexts, that it most often occurs in the police and court system, followed in the workplace, in schools, in housing and in restaurants and in

Chart 51: Places Where Racism Most Often Occurs for Aboriginal Men
(Quantitative n=326)



In terms of the most prevalent site of the police and the court system one respondent stated:

The police racially profile us that is for sure...and it is even worse for the security guards who want to be just like cops and I am sure that we are harassed more than the blacks. It is as if we are the worst that there is...even immigrants pick on us. They have no idea who we are except that we are the lowest in society.
(Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Two further recent examples of racial profiling by security guards in Toronto include the highly publicised news stories of the beating of an Aboriginal man by St. Michael's Hospital security guards in 2009⁷¹ and the beating of a homeless Aboriginal man by security guards of a parking garage in 2010.⁷²

71 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/story/2009/05/06/hospital-charges.html>).

72 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/story/2010/02/23/toronto-homeless-beating.html>).

Other respondents spoke of racism as a general devaluing of Aboriginal people and the prevalence of negative stereotypes of poverty addictions:

We forget who we are and where we come from when we are in Toronto and we are faced with racism and labelling and are expected to be a drug addict...that's really blatant racism here in the city. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Society really devalues us. I hate to identify as First Nations as I know what people are thinking. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

We get a lot of racism from black people...I'm not sure why. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Aboriginal men also understand racism and discrimination to be occurring within the Aboriginal community. When asked if there are incidents of Aboriginal people discriminating against each other, a significant proportion (43%) of Aboriginal men community survey respondents indicated yes.

There is also a lot of racism within the Aboriginal community as well...and so you get it from the outside as well as from the inside. (Aboriginal Men's Focus Group)

Aboriginal people don't like to see others Aboriginal people succeed and will put each other down. We can be very jealous of each other. (Community Survey Respondent)

It depends on where you come from in some Native organizations. You can be discriminated against because of your cultural background (Cree) or because of which reserve you come from. (Community Survey Respondent)

Native People can be the hardest on our own people. People with jobs and so on tend to look down on those that don't have anything and are struggling. (Community Survey Respondent)



into the circumstances facing Aboriginal people, particularly women in Toronto. There are several Aboriginal agencies that provide services, programs and support for Aboriginal women. Additionally there are programs across many Aboriginal agencies that directly provide service and support for Aboriginal women. Across many Aboriginal cultures, the role of women as caregivers, life-givers and providers is salient. As one respondent stated:

An Aboriginal woman within the family is the rock. She keeps the family together. They are getting stronger. We were strong before, but now we are stronger.
(Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

This chapter will discuss some of the issues identified by Aboriginal women and community members around the roles of Aboriginal women in Toronto, as well as their successes and challenges.

6.1 Aboriginal Women's Support Agencies in Toronto

Aboriginal Women have two main agencies that are there solely for the purpose of supporting them. Anduhyuan Women's Shelter and the Native Women's Resource Centre provide important services for women who are fleeing domestic violence and require housing, other resources around parenting, housing, employment and education. A list of the Aboriginal Women's support agencies is listed at the end of this chapter.

6.2 Major Themes for Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women face a complex set of challenges as they struggle to survive and thrive in an urban setting. The data from the community surveys and focus groups provided some important insights into these complexities. The major themes indicated through the research includes income, both in terms of poverty and financial success, single family households, housing, relationships, discrimination, leadership and addictions and recovery. These issues are also discussed in other chapters and are also intimately linked.

I feel successful for raising my son as a single mother. He's smart and healthy. For now, that's what I consider success.

(Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- Aboriginal women in Toronto are both thriving economically as professionals and home owners as well as dealing with poverty in raising children in lone parent households.
- The challenges for Aboriginal women often include multiple, overlapping issues such as poverty, housing, relationships, discrimination and addictions.
- Leadership both within the organizations, but also within the traditional roles of Elders is a significant role that Aboriginal women play in Toronto which provides a source of mentoring for younger Aboriginal women and their families.

Aboriginal women in an urban context are not one homogenous group. They come from different communities with different traditions and languages. We know that Aboriginal women “constitute a vibrant and highly diverse segment of Canada’s population, who share a common legacy of marginalization and oppression.”⁷³ Aboriginal women comprise a large proportion of the respondents in this project. The women were from various backgrounds, communities, occupied many professions, socio-economic status and had profound insights

73 Dion-Stout, M. & Kipling, G. (1998). *Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic research directions for policy development*. Canada: Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data.

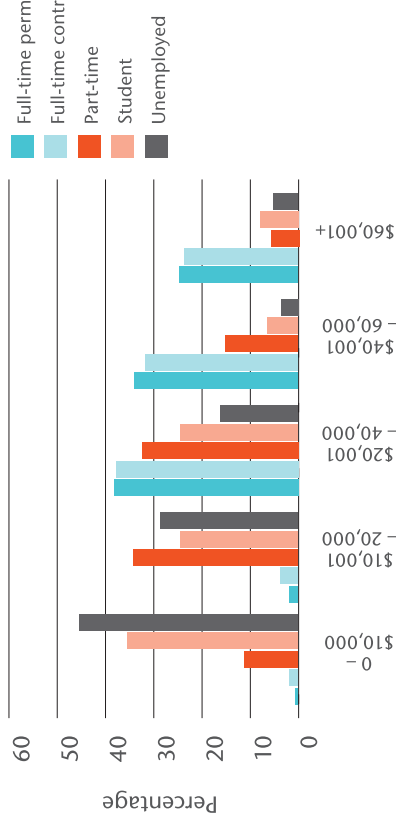
6.2.1 Women and Income

The incomes of Aboriginal women showed some interesting and contrasting results. Many Aboriginal women in Toronto occupy total family incomes in the middle class categories, as well as work in professional positions and are home owners. As well, many Aboriginal women in Toronto experience poverty at alarming rates. Some of this is related to their low incomes and employment status, which is discussed in Chapter 9 on poverty and social services. This section will explore both ends of the income spectrum for Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women are accessing poverty prevention services at high rates. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of Aboriginal women respondents from the community survey indicated that they had accessed poverty prevention services in the past or currently (such as food banks). Twenty-one percent (21%) of Aboriginal women respondents from the community survey indicated that they were currently on or had been on social assistance at one time. The community survey data also revealed that a proportion of women who have been on social assistance also have children at home (53%).

As Chapter 9 describes, only 55% of Aboriginal women in the community surveys indicated that they were employed in full-time positions. As Chart 6A indicates below, those in full-time permanent positions were primarily occupying total family household incomes in the \$20,000 to \$60,000 per year range. Very few women who occupied full-time positions had a total family income of less than \$20,000 per year. However, a growing percentage of Aboriginal women are experiencing financial success and earning over \$40,000 per year and are in full time permanent and contract positions.

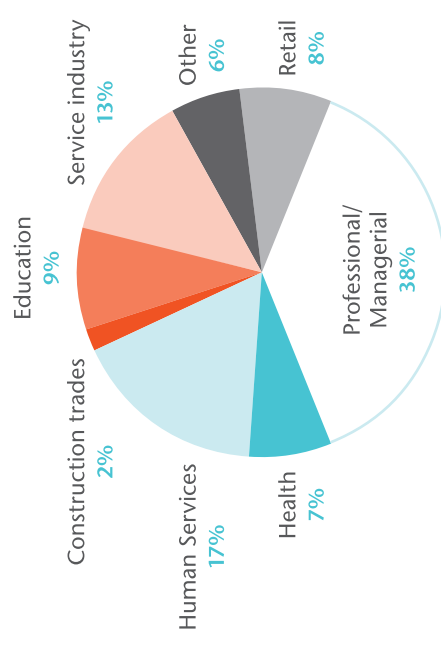
Chart 6A: Aboriginal Women Employment Status vs. Total Household Income (Quantitative n=375)



This chart shows that the majority of Aboriginal women respondents are earning less than \$40,000 per year. This is specifically important with regards to the number of women who are running single parent households as discussed in the following section.

Respondents were also asked about their occupation type. Chart 6B shows where women identified their occupation roles:

Chart 6B: Women and Occupation Type (Quantitative n=292)



Despite the majority of women earning between \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year, there is a high percentage of them who work in a professional or managerial role. This is significant because it likely means that they have completed some form of post secondary education and they have more opportunities to improve their careers and improve the lives of their families. In addition to their own income and professional positions, if they are in a committed relationship, there is a likelihood that their spouse is also working in a professional role.

However, if they are working in such roles in an Aboriginal social service or non-profit setting, their salaries will likely be lower than mainstream business or industry due to the significant disparities in funding for these organizations.

The prevalence of Aboriginal women occupying positions within professional and managerial roles (38%) along with education (9%), human services (17%) and health (7%) is significant. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these respondents are working in fields that require education and training. It further indicates that Toronto's Aboriginal women's population is increasingly becoming educated and financially mobile and providing a strong economic base for the development of their communities and family.

6.2.2 Aboriginal Single Family Households

Aboriginal lone parent households led by women are not an uncommon phenomenon. Prior research indicates that there has been a long history of Aboriginal women migrating to Toronto as the head of lone parent households, and who subsequently find themselves facing significant economic challenges.⁷⁴

There is a large portion of Aboriginal women who are single mothers. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Aboriginal women from the community survey indicated that they have children that live at home with them. Aboriginal women face a unique set of challenges in raising children within a single parent household. Seventy-three percent (73%) of

Aboriginal women respondents to the specialized survey indicated single mothers face specific and unique challenges in the urban center. In the community surveys, 81% of Aboriginal women indicated Aboriginals face specific challenges as single parents. Many of the challenges are economically related, but also related to being away from extended family networks which are crucial in providing support for single mothers. This is consistent with census findings for Canada. National data tells us that there are more First Nation and Métis single mothers as well as a higher proportion of Aboriginal children (33%) than non-Aboriginal children (17%) living in a household with a parent. This situation is even more prominent in urban environments.

Census data reveals that over 50% of Aboriginal children are living in a single parent household, contrasted with 17% of non-Aboriginal children. Inevitably, the majority of these single parent households are led by mothers.⁷⁵ Williams (1997) examined the geographic dispersal of Aboriginal female lone parent households in Toronto in the 1990s and found that the majority of this population resides in the eastern part of the city, with eight percent living in Scarborough and the Gabriel Dumont housing and a large percentage of 35% live “of Coxwell Avenue, but west of Victoria Park, so they are living in immediate boundaries of the downtown core”.⁷⁶ This area is characterized by low income and high unemployment by Statistics Canada socio-economic indicators research done in 1990.

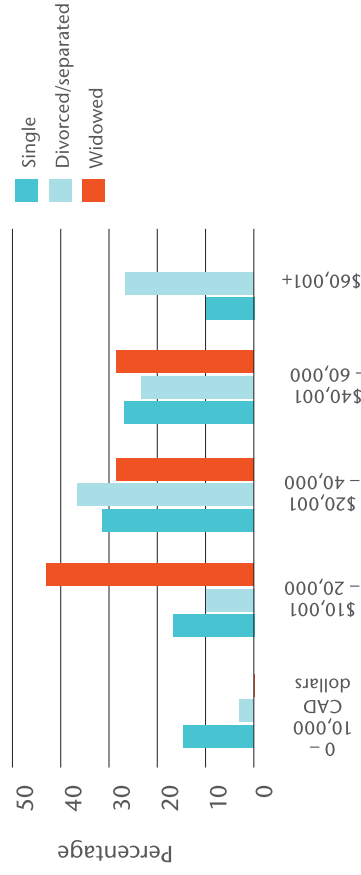
The majority of divorced/separated, single and widowed women with children at home earn between \$20,000 and \$40,000 per year. Census 6C shows the relationship between single parent families and their family income from the community survey. Economic instability is often associated with larger issues of instability in the home environment such as housing challenges, health-related issues and in some cases addictions and violence. Ninety percent (90%) of Aboriginal women agreed in the community survey that a stable family life is a key contributor to success.

75 Health Canada (2003). *A statistical profile on the health of First Nations in Canada*. Ottawa: Health Canada, First Nations Inuit Health Branch.

76 Williams, A. (1997). *Urban Aboriginals: A Focus on Aboriginal Women in Toronto*. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, XVII, 1, 75-101, p 91.

74 Williams, A. (1997). *Urban Aboriginals: A Focus on Aboriginal Women in Toronto*. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, XVII, 1, 75-101.

Chart 6C: Single Parent Households by Total Family Income (Quantitative n=126)



In many cases, Aboriginal women find themselves in a home situation where they are looking after extended family members including grandchildren or nieces and nephews. While this is 'normal' in terms of many traditional Aboriginal home environments, it often does not fit with mainstream's definition of the family unit. This becomes problematic for Aboriginal women specifically when they are forced to deal with social service agencies that do not recognize this type of family environment. Anderson and Ball (2011) describe this urban trend:

*Families in urban centres may expand to include more distant relatives from rural or remote communities who come to the city for school, work, or special programs. The 'open doors' found in many First Nation and Métis families no doubt stem from the traditional extended family structures that were ubiquitous before colonization.*⁷⁷

These situations which are uncharacteristic in many mainstream families are an important cultural component to urban family life and in many cases, the only option for many families. One respondent described a situation:

I've seen a mom who has older children and who ends up having younger children. I've seen the older children who now have to take the role of mother and so they start caring for their siblings. Then they are being judged for that.

They are told it's not their responsibility. It's a cultural thing, and some people don't recognize that. It's important to keep the family together, whatever it looks like. It's like we are all sharing one teepee. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Women who are looking after their children alone face much stress in their lives. Beyond the stress of being a parent and instilling values into your child, the economic stress is also burdensome. One woman described her commitment to her children:

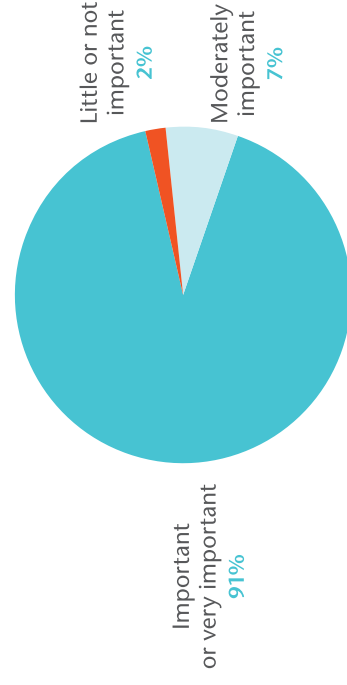
We will do anything to provide for our children, we will work Saturdays and Sundays. There is no respite care on the weekends and when we need to do so there is no respite care. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Single mothers can also become vulnerable to the child welfare system, especially if they have been involved with the CAS before. One woman described her situation:

You can voluntarily put your child in the system for three months temporarily. It took 23 months to get my kids back. I was relapsing, so I gave them up temporarily. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

The children and youth in those families also feel that stress and plays out in their daily lives and ability to thrive. Chart 6D depicts the connection between stress and single parent families for youth. Ninety-one percent (91%) of community survey respondents considered it to be an important or very important cause of stress.

Chart 6D: Single Parent Families as a Major Cause of Stress for Youth (Quantitative n=482)



77 Anderson, K. & Ball, J. (2011). Foundations: First Nations and Métis Families. In D. Long and O.P. Dickason (Eds.) *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

It is these unique situations that many Aboriginal women face in terms of justifying their complex home environments that are challenging and require support from social support agencies and the community. Aboriginal women, specifically compared to Aboriginal men have maintained some of those traditional roles as primary caregivers despite the processes of colonization and urbanization. One respondent describes it as:

I've been all those things in my life: the cook, the gardener, the plumber, the waitress and the garbage lady. There's not too much an Aboriginal woman won't do to take care of her family. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Recognizing these complexities and required support is the key to the success of Aboriginal women in an urban environment. Another respondent discussed the issues of lack of Aboriginal male role models and how that is an added stress for Aboriginal women in lone parent households:

There are no good Aboriginal male role models; the ones that teach, that fire keep. It's the man's responsibility to teach the son, but you can't do that as a single mother. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

The impacts of single parent households on children is discussed in the children and youth chapter.

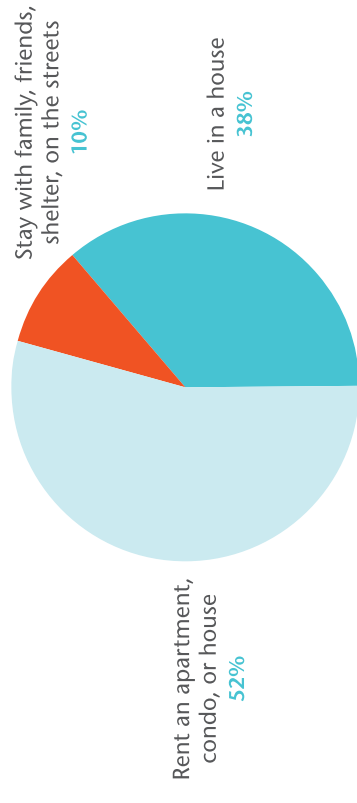
6.2.3 Aboriginal Women and Housing

Housing is an important foundation for a stable household. Aboriginal women indicated that housing was an important issue for them and their families. One respondent stated:

The key issue facing Aboriginal women is housing, employment and trying to fit into the community. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

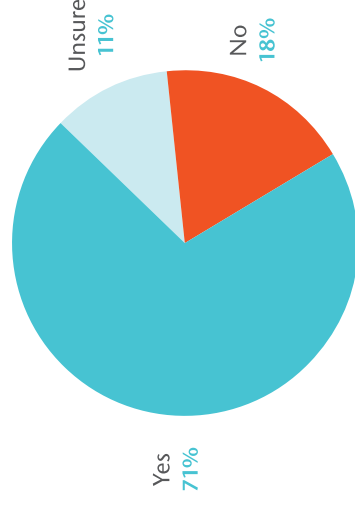
Aboriginal women primarily rent an apartment, condominium or house (52%) or live in a house (38%). Ten percent (10%) of the Aboriginal women indicated that they have multiple housing situations which include staying with friends, family, living in a shelter or on the streets as illustrated in Chart 6E.

Chart 6E: Housing Situation of Aboriginal Women (Quantitative n=478)



Eighteen percent (18%) of Aboriginal women respondents from the community survey (Chart 6F) indicated that their housing situation was unstable, 71% considered their housing situation stable 11% were unsure.

Chart 6F: Aboriginal Women and Stable Housing (Quantitative n=459)



Due to the nature of many Aboriginal families who function as single parent households with extended family, there is some difficulty securing affordable housing that will accommodate these specific circumstances. As one respondent indicated:

The rent out here is very difficult. There are few places with more than four bedrooms in subsidized housing. I have friends who will take a step back to get ahead. They will take their family and go live in a shelter so it becomes an emergency and then they can get housing. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

The community surveys also revealed some interesting statistics around home ownership and gender. The surveys indicated that 73% of home owners were female, 26% were male and 1% was two-spirited. Of the female home owners, 78% were employed full time in either permanent or contract positions. Of the male home owners, 94% were employed full time in either permanent or contract positions. These statistics do not account for the reality that many of these Aboriginal people are in a two-income household; however it is important to note the high propensity of home ownership amongst Aboriginal women. Chapter 9 provides more detailed information on the gaps in housing for Aboriginal people in Toronto.

6.2.4 Aboriginal Women and Relationships

Many Aboriginal women find themselves fleeing domestic violence in their own communities for urban centres. Many other women find themselves stuck in the cycles of domestic violence. The majority of Aboriginal women from the community survey felt that abusive relationships were a major barrier for their success (87%). A large portion of Aboriginal women who were in relationships were with Aboriginal men. The surveys revealed that 44% of Aboriginal women in a relationship had an Aboriginal partner. Respondents discussed some of the issues for Aboriginal men which lead to the negative relationships they experience with Aboriginal men:

Our Aboriginal men who have been misled by the dominant society, our men are starting to recognize how much of an honour it is to be an Aboriginal woman; that we are to be respected. It got a little washed out over the years. They were taught that men were supposed to be stronger, but now they are being taught that women should be held in esteem. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Another respondent discussed the challenges she has with her partner in engaging him in family life. She discussed the lack of healing support for him:

I've had a partner who was unwell. How can I have him in the family? There is a facility for Aboriginal men to get better. You have to go so far to get help. It's a 28-day program. That's not enough time. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Aboriginal women who want to stay with their abusive partner find a difficult time finding support for their decisions. One respondent described her experience:

In the days when I wasn't well, I was assaulted by my partner and they told me that I asked for it. I still wanted to be with him because he was my children's father. I was told that I had it coming. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Important themes around domestic violence perpetrated by Aboriginal men are outlined in the Aboriginal men's chapter.

6.2.5 Aboriginal Women and Discrimination

Being the victim of discrimination is a demoralizing experience. Many Aboriginal people face discrimination and it impacts their self-image and ability to succeed. One respondent described it as this:

Stereotypes stop many native women from being what they could be. They try hard to be anything but native. Women try to live to a certain standard, not to live into that negative stereotype is very hard. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Aboriginal women in Toronto reported experiencing significant amounts of discrimination in their day to day lives. Eighty-six percent (86%) of Aboriginal women in the community survey indicated discrimination was an important barrier in their success. Aboriginal men felt that it was even more significant (98%) in the success of Aboriginal women. Much of this discrimination happens within institutions such as hospitals and the court system. One respondent shared her experience in the hospital:

I've been to the hospital over the years, and they've asked me if I've been drinking with my stomach problems. Meanwhile I've been sober for many years. So there is an assumption. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Discrimination also occurs heavily within the legal and court system. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Aboriginal women in the community survey indicated that they felt discrimination by non-Aboriginal

people was a problem. Forty-nine percent (49%) of Aboriginal women stated that discrimination occurred most often in the court system. One respondent indicated her experience in dealing with the Crown Attorney and the legal system:

In the legal system, you get judged. All they see is this native person who is just drunk all the time. They don't ask why I'm drunk all the time, they don't know my history. They think I am so violent. The Crown, I've known her for three years and she just hates me, she says you are just drunk. The cops make fun of me and say "are you going to use your status card?" When I ask for programs like the diversion program, the duty council say "how do you know about this?" He just wanted me to go through the whole legal system. Then I start to think they are right, like maybe I am just nothing. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Aboriginal women also felt discriminated against in Aboriginal organizations by Aboriginal people. Forty-four percent (44%) of Aboriginal women in the community survey indicated that discrimination by other Aboriginal people was a problem. Aboriginal agencies are looked to as the basis of support for many Aboriginal women and when they are unable to gain such support from their own people, it can become very dehumanizing. One respondent described her experience:

We talk about all of this stereotyping in the mainstream, but there is the same happening with the support from Aboriginal agencies. Sometimes you don't get that support. When you lose your foundation, you can lose your footing. You can get into drugs, alcohol, gangs and a lot of shit that you didn't think you would get into. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Another respondent indicated her experience in Aboriginal organizations:

Even the native organizations, the workers are very condescending. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

The incipit nature of discrimination, specifically within institutions like the health care system and legal system can become burdensome for Aboriginal people. As one woman described it:

People's perception is what is going to keep us down the most. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

One respondent from the middle class focus group stated that discrimination happens within all socio-economic groups and is related

to the non-competitive nature of Aboriginal people. She described her experience:

As a woman that is Native, you sort of get ignored and your personality becomes that cellular memory that we have. We don't come from "competition, squish everyone down no problem, I am just going to walk all over you". What I see generally speaking in my co-workers and other people I talk to, is that there is that trait. We are all equal. The client is in the centre, and all the different medicine people and all the different people in that person's life are in their circle surrounding them, and no one is better than anyone else. We didn't walk all over our people. (Middle Class Focus Group)

This notion of community building is not one that necessarily coincides with mainstream notions of competition and advancement. Emerging Aboriginal middle class is an important area for Aboriginal women in Toronto. As the income data reveals, there is a large number of women working in positions that require post secondary education and training, working in full-time permanent and contract positions and owning their own homes. This is consistent with other research which indicates that Aboriginal women are more likely than men to have completed some post secondary education, which makes them better suited to finding a job in an urban area.⁷⁸ We also see, particularly within the social service agencies, the prevalence of Aboriginal women occupying leadership positions within the community. It is often at these levels where we see stereotypes challenged and new revived perspectives on the role of Aboriginal women within Aboriginal communities.

6.2.6 Aboriginal Women and Leadership

The role of Aboriginal women as leaders is nothing new in Aboriginal communities. Across Aboriginal communities we see leadership by women taking many forms. Anderson (2011) describes some of the variations on Aboriginal women in leadership:

First Nation and Métis elders talk about 'head women' in their families, women who governed large extended families through the authority they had earned

78 Beavon, D. & Cooke, M. (2003). An application of the United Nations Human Development Index to Registered Indians in Canada, In J.P. White, D. Beavon, & R. Maxim (Eds.) *Aboriginal Conditions*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

*during their lifetime. This authority came from recognition that the elderly women made decisions based on the best interest of the family and future generations, a principle that is evident in a number of Aboriginal societies.*⁷⁹

In Toronto specifically, Aboriginal women have played an important role as community mobilizers and leaders. Howard Bobiwash (2003) describes the transition that Aboriginal women underwent compared to Aboriginal men in migrating to Toronto. She describes the post World War II era that saw many Aboriginal women coming to urban centres with relatively transferable job skills such as domestic work, which provided them with many opportunities to establish themselves comfortably.⁸⁰ It should be no surprise for us to see Aboriginal women continuing to take leadership roles armed with a new set of skills and education. Notably, the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) have experience running the Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership (BAWL) Program, in partnership with Accenture, Microsoft and ACOSYS Consulting.⁸¹

One life history respondent describes her role in the community as a leader. She describes it as something she feels compelled to do, and does not take it on as a burden:

I feel like I am in a leadership position. It was a natural segue into this position. When I first started in the community, I fished, toted and carried. I made sure people had chairs, a podium, shade and water. And gradually over the years, they make sure I have a chair, they make sure I have a podium, shade, or water...I'm an activist; I do things that I am passionate about. I am a crane clan, so that's what I am. But I didn't start out that way, it just landed there. It's not burdensome. Sometimes I think "why don't they ask somebody else" because there are much brighter people, they are much more educated. But they said, they want me to talk about this, so I have to do it. (Life History Respondent)

The Aboriginal social service organizations have high proportions of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are organizational leaders such as Board Members, Managers and Executive Directors. Five out of 11

social service agencies are run by Aboriginal women in roles such as Executive Directors or Board Designates. The Aboriginal arts agencies are also heavily saturated by Aboriginal women both as staff, board directors and administrative leaders. This type of leadership is important because it allows the organizations to be shaped and run in ways that often resemble traditional decision making models and focus on values such as honouring family, children and youth.

The taking up of traditional roles as women within Aboriginal communities has played itself out in terms of community activities. This is evident in the beginnings of the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto, where community members, primarily women, began to gather and formulate how they could build an Aboriginal community within an urban setting. As Howard-Bobiwash describes (2003) many Aboriginal women worked to find funds and the political will to establish many Aboriginal services and agencies within the city, many of which started with the 'North American Indian Club' in 1950 the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto in 1962.⁸² This type of organizing or activism has been a key component to the establishment of Aboriginal organizations and services within the city. One respondent describes her activism as one of a warrior:

I am taking on caretaker and teacher roles in my community and I am probably a warrior in the fight against HIV/AIDS in our community. So being two-spirited means I am a warrior even though I haven't killed anything. There are different kinds of wars and battles. (Life History Respondent)

Along with Aboriginal women occupying roles within organizations we also see the prevalence of Aboriginal female Elders in the community. For example, Lillian McGregor is an esteemed Elder who is appointed to the Order of Ontario and who is the first Aboriginal woman to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of Toronto. It is important to have role models such as this in the community for other Aboriginal women, men and youth to emulate.

The large amount of Aboriginal female leaders in Toronto provides an important opportunity to look at the concept of resilience. Aboriginal

79 Anderson, K. & Ball, J. (2011). Foundations: First Nations and Métis Families. In D. Long & O.P.

Dickason (Eds.) *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

80 Bobiwash-Howard, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

81 For more information on the Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership (BAWL) Program please see: (<http://www.onwa-tbay.ca/pages/building-aboriginal-womens-leadership>).

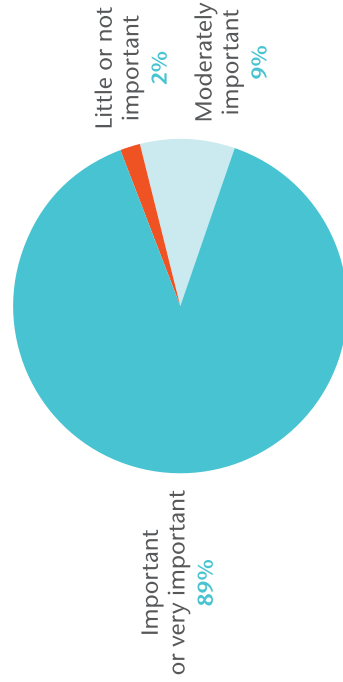
82 Bobiwash-Howard, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

scholar Scarpino (2007) describes resilience as a “process that includes symbolism, the ability to grow despite adversity and a universal energy that has been characterised as God or the Creator.”⁸³

6.2.7 Addictions and Recovery

Some Aboriginal women indicated that addictions and recovering are difficult in an urban setting. Closely related to addictions are mental health issues like depression as well as socio-economic issues like poverty. Survey respondents spoke of how, in their experiences, seeking help for addictions begins to feel demoralizing and experiencing rejection heightens these feelings. Chart 6G shows how important Aboriginal women thought a successful healing journey was to their overall wellness. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of Aboriginal women respondents identified it as being either important or very important and only 2% indicated it as being of little or no importance.

Chart 6G: Aboriginal Women’s Perspectives on the Importance of Healing Journey for Life Success (Quantitative n=338)



Survey respondents indicated that there were gaps in services for Aboriginal women attempting to recover from addictions and gain control over their lives. One respondent stated that there is a need for more crisis beds:

There has got to be more places for us to go when we are in crisis. Anduhyuam only has so many beds. I don't think age should be an issue. When you are done on your face, whether you are 16 or 60, anything in life can happen. There should be some place that says “we can help you”. Instead, the message is, ‘here, have a drink’. (Aboriginal Women’s Focus Group)

Another woman responded to the importance of having a place to go where they don’t feel judged. One respondent describes her situation and feelings of inferiority:

I got into a big depression, and when that sets in, the addictions sets in. As a single Aboriginal person with an addiction like me in recovery, when you go and ask for help and you get turned down, you feel bad because you are being judged. The next thing you know I find myself in the bar drowning my sorrows. If no one will help me, why should I help myself? (Aboriginal Women’s Focus Group)

The need for support for Aboriginal women facing addictions recovery is an immense task due to the complications of their lives which includes issues of poverty, children and in some cases domestic violence. We know that the impact of a woman suffering from addiction on her family and children is significant and the chances of her children suffering from such addictions in the future are high. In many issues, there are complexities and nuances that must be dealt with holistically in order for full recovery and healing to take place.

Aboriginal women face tremendous challenges and burdens as they relate to themselves and families in an urban community. The Aboriginal women who participated in the community surveys and focus groups identified a complex set of issues facing them and their families.

Women hold a special place in Aboriginal communities. Many of the traditional roles that they occupied pre-contact are still in existence in a contemporary form. Women are still caregivers, life givers to the ones who pass down traditions and culture to their children and grandchildren. These traditional roles are increasingly difficult to find in urban centres. This chapter explored those challenges, specifically as they related to poverty, single family households, housing, relationships, discrimination, leadership, and addictions and recovery. These issues cannot be viewed in isolation and their intimate connection to each other must be examined.

83 Scarpino, G. (2007). Resilience in Urban Aboriginal Women. *Native Social Work Journal*, March 1, 2007, 33-56.

Chapter 7

ABORIGINAL SENIORS AND ELDERS

The issues facing women must also be taken into consideration when discussing issues facing Aboriginal men. A large percentage of Aboriginal women (44%) who are in relationships, are in relationships with Aboriginal men. Supports for Aboriginal families to address poverty, violence and addictions will go a long way to ensuring the children of these couples thrive and grow into stable adults and the Aboriginal community of Toronto develops in a positive manner.

6.3 Aboriginal Women's Support Agencies

6.3.1 Anduhyuan Women's Shelter

The Anduhyuan Women's Shelter is one of Canada's oldest shelters and provides specific programs and services to Aboriginal women with or without children who are leaving an abusive situation. Within Anduhyuan, Nekenaan Second Stage Housing is a program which provides temporary housing to Aboriginal housing for women as they move from an abusive domestic situation into their new life. This is a recently renovated six storey building with 24 furnished units, some of which are single occupancy and some of which are shared. These units are also for women and her children.

6.3.2 Native Women's Resource Centre

The Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto provides ongoing support for women through a variety of client based programs. These include academic upgrading, assistance with housing, shower, laundry and clothing bank, advocacy and wellness through accessing resources and support for appointments and counselling, employment supports, parenting programs and support for healthy families, youth programs and healthy baby, healthy children.

I believe that it is the responsibility of the older people to inspire the younger people. It is the role of the uncles and aunts, the grandmothers and grandfathers, to encourage the younger generation to further their education and to be the best possible person that they can be. It is like that when I am talking, I am speaking the words of my grandmother or my mother. These are not my words but the words that have been passed down to me.
(Life History Respondent)

Summary of Key Points in The Chapter

- Aboriginal Elders and seniors are struggling financially, with a majority earning less than \$20,000 a year and with no representation in the over \$70,000 income category.
- Social isolation is a major issue for Aboriginal Elders and Seniors and they are looking for ways to support families and to have places and activities connect with children and youth so as to pass on their cultural knowledge.
- There is a need for additional services in the areas of activities programming, assisted living and palliative care.
- Elders have a diversity of roles in the community as organizational board and committee members, teachers and counsellors, spiritual practitioners, guest speakers and advocates for Aboriginal cultures and languages.
- Aboriginal Elders and seniors consider racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people as well as the discrimination against Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people to be a significant problem.

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key issues that are important to Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto. In addition to the findings from the community survey and key information

interviews, this chapter includes the results from one focus group as well as the life histories of four Elders. Beginning with a review of key demographic considerations, this chapter then explores the issue of social isolation and the unmet need to better connect Elders and seniors with Aboriginal children and youth in the community. This chapter then looks at other gaps in services to Aboriginal Elders and seniors and explores the roles that, specifically, Elders play in the community as well as the challenges of racism and discrimination.

7.1 Aboriginal Elders and Seniors

One of the main findings of this chapter is that both Aboriginal Elders and seniors would like to have more opportunities to share their cultural knowledge with Aboriginal children and youth in Toronto; and although both have much to share, it is important to acknowledge the differences between them. For the purposes of this study, we have defined both Aboriginal Elders and seniors as those who are 65 years of age and older. Our understanding of what distinguishes Aboriginal Elders from seniors is in keeping with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) that identified Elders as those older (but not exclusively) members of the community that have attained 'insight, wisdom, and authority' and who are recognized by the community as being best able to guide the young and advise them according to their knowledge, life experiences and traditions.⁸⁴

Elders are also considered to have special gifts of cultural and spiritual knowledge. They have worked hard to earn this knowledge and are recognized for their wisdom. They are caring and generous with their time and knowledge and the community looks to them for guidance. According to Toronto Elder Vern Harper in his 1992 submission to RCAP:

The communities will define who they have as...community Elders. But in the true sense of Elders, they are people who are spiritual leaders, who have dedicated their lives and will continue to until they go to the Spirit World....They live the culture, they know the culture, and they have been trained in it. These are the true Elders.

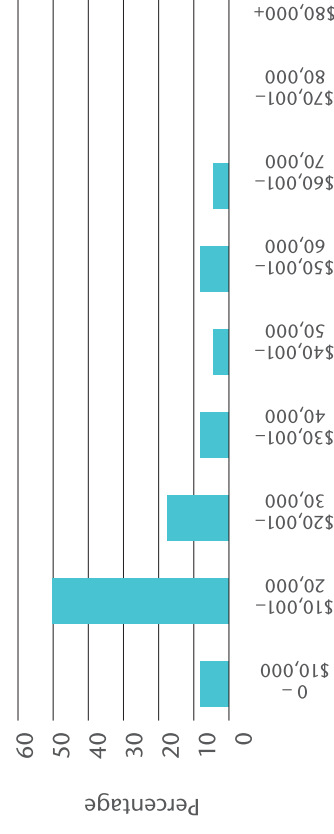
We have some Elders you might never, ever hear of. They stay in the bush, they stay in their communities, but they are Elders. They are spiritual Elders, and they live that way of life.

As part of the TARP research we have completed life histories with four Aboriginal Elders in Toronto, including Vern Harper, And Wesley, Jackie LaValley and Lillian McGregor.

7.2 Aboriginal Elders and Seniors: Key Demographic Considerations

In discussing some key TARP demographic findings relating to Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto, it is important to note that those over 65 years of age accounted for only 3% of TARP community survey and key informant interview respondents. In Toronto, Aboriginal Elders and seniors are struggling financially with 58% earning less than \$20,000 per year; occupying the highest proportion (50%) of all TARP age groups in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 income category. Notably, there are approximately twice as many Elders and seniors in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 income range than there are Aboriginal youth (18 to 24), the second highest represented group. As well we see from Chart 7A, that Aboriginal Elders and seniors not represented in the above \$70,000 income ranges.

Chart 7A: Aboriginal Elders/Seniors Household Income (Quantitative n=24)

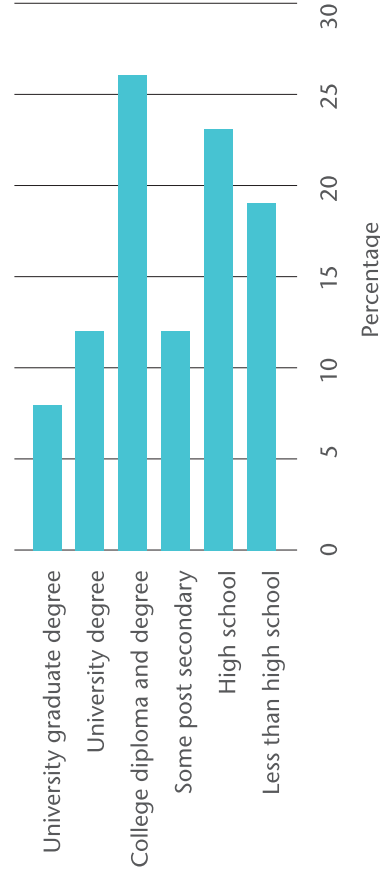


84 For further reading see 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, Volume 4, Chapter 3: Elder's Perspectives. At: [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sjm3_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115093452/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sjm3_e.html).

A large proportion (82%) are not working and of those 18% that are, their employment status is equally split between full-time permanent positions (9%) and part-time (9%) employment. As well, 32% of TARP Elder and senior respondents indicated having accessed poverty prevention and assistance programs in Toronto in the last five years.

In Chart 7B, we see that a significant proportion (41%) of Aboriginal Elders and seniors have attained either a high school diploma or less. Notably, at 18% they have the highest percentage of those who have not graduated from high school.⁸⁵ At 27%, the common level of educational attainment for Elders and seniors is a college diploma, however 12% also have university degrees, while 8% have university graduate degrees.

Chart 7B: Aboriginal Elders/Seniors Educational Attainment (Quantitative n=26)

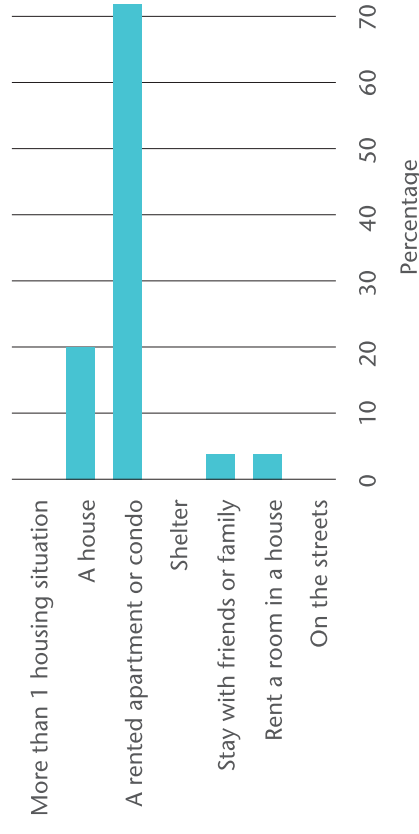


In terms of available housing for Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto, only 12% reported owning their homes; this figure is 7% below the overall TARP Aboriginal respondent population rate of 19%.⁸⁶ From Chart 7C, we also see that a majority (72%) of Elders and seniors live in a rented apartment or condo, 20% live in a house, while a minority (4%) live with friends or family or rent a room in a house (4%). Moreover, in spite of these low rates of home ownership, a significant proportion of Elders and seniors (79%) consider their housing situation to be stable.

85 For further reading on TARP respondent education attainment rates across all age categories, please see Chapter 3, Demographics and Mobility Patterns Chart 3R.

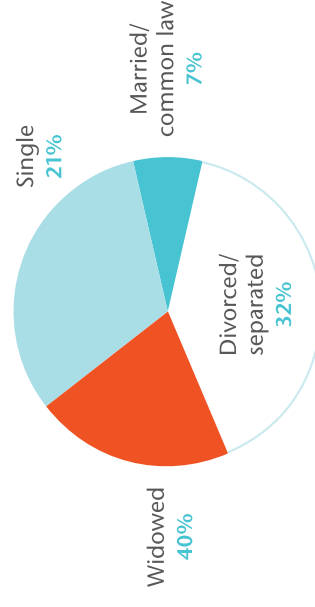
86 For further reading on TARP findings on Aboriginal home ownership and housing situation, see Chapter 11, Housing in the Toronto Aboriginal Community.

Chart 7C: Housing Status for Aboriginal Elders/Seniors (Quantitative n=25)As



discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter on the concerns of Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto, Chart 7D points to the experience of loneliness and social isolation by the group of respondents. An overwhelming majority (93%) of Aboriginal Elder and senior respondents indicate that they were either widowed (40%), divorced or separated (32%) and/or single (21%). Only a small minority (7%) of respondents reported that they were either married or in a common law relationship.

Chart 7D: Aboriginal Elders/Seniors Relationship Status (Quantitative n=28)



7.3 Issues of Concern to Aboriginal Elders and Seniors

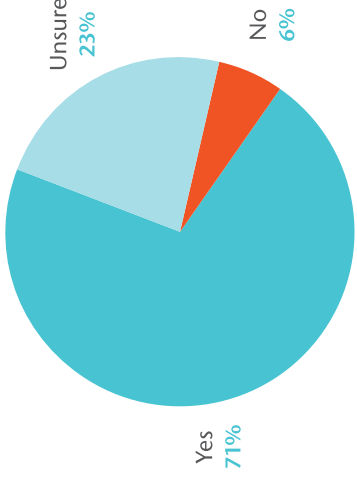
In Table 7A we see that the TARP community survey respondents identified the most important issue facing Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto as social isolation. Moreover, the second, third and seventh ranked issues of the lack of transportation services, family/peer support and activities programming respectively, can be seen as contributing factors of Elder and senior social isolation.

Table 7A: Major Issues Facing Aboriginal Elders and Seniors Living in Toronto

MAJOR ISSUES FACING ELDERS / SENIORS (QUANTITATIVE N=623)	RESPONSE % OF 'VERY IMPORTANT'	RANK
Social isolation	73	1
Lack of transportation services	68	2
Lack of assisted living services	68	3
Lack of family peer support	67	4
Lack of general senior housing	66	5
Poor proximity to housing services	64	6
Lack of activities programming	63	7
Lack of physical fitness resources	63	7
Lack of alcohol and drug abuse counselling	56	8

Relating to the most important issue of Elder and senior social isolation, a significant majority (71%) of community survey respondents indicated that there is a lack of passing of traditional cultural knowledge from Elders to Aboriginal youth in Toronto.

Chart 7E: Lack of Traditional Cultural Knowledge Transmission from Elders to Youth (Quantitative n=478)



Aboriginal Elders and seniors TARP focus group and life history respondents also discussed the need for more interaction with children and youth but noted there were not any formal opportunities to do so. They discussed that the creation of the Children's Room in the basement of the Native Canadian Centre has alienated children from adults at a time when more interaction is needed. The respondents they had a lot of important and relevant information and knowledge to share with the children and youth, and have had some positive experiences bonding with them in the past.

According to these respondents, the lack of cultural teachings for young people has led to high incarceration rates and socialization problems relating to their frustrations in not knowing who they are as Aboriginal people. Without a strong, positive sense of self, Aboriginal youth become susceptible to the stereotypes that mainstream society has for them and the delinquency and addictions that often result from internalized notions of negativity and inferiority. Respondents felt strongly that, in spite of residential school efforts to assimilate Aboriginal people, they held the cultural knowledge necessary to infuse Aboriginal children and youth with a sense of cultural pride and to guide them along a positive life path of wellness.

I feel that Elders as well as seniors are a very important part of our Native culture because they carry the knowledge of our ancestors. Even though, as myself I do grow up in that culture due to the assimilation and genocide, but despite that,

had it. Until 1953 we were not allowed to learn any of it, it was very difficult. A lot of our Elders carry information and if they had an opportunity to share that with the younger generation it would help them learn about themselves. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I believe that it is the responsibility of the older people to inspire the younger people. It is the role of the uncles and aunts, the grandmothers and grandfathers, to encourage the younger generation to further their education and to be the best possible person that they can be. It is like that when I am talking, I am speaking the words of my grandmother or my mother. These are not my words but the words that have been passed down to me. (Life History Respondent)

We as native peoples knew how important these elements were to us. That was our way of life. Only the seniors know that way of life and it is important that we teach the younger people this. I don't know if there is a way to reverse the damage that was done. To honour our ancestors, the flying ones, the swimming ones, we carry this knowledge. We need to share it. There again, we have a stumbling block, which is residential school. At that time we weren't supposed to talk about who we were. Natives at that time were considered savages and dirty people. That's what I came out of in order to be able to talk about it. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I really enjoy working with young people in Toronto, especially at the Native Child and Family Services. I work with them and teach them the things that I know in order to prevent them from harming themselves. I also work with the high-risk youth and I really enjoy that work. As adults we have to provide some help to them, we have to listen to them. (Life History Respondent)

Several focus group and one life history respondent spoke of the importance of sharing the culture through doing things together with children and youth like rug or basket making, cooking, being in camp together and having opportunities for them to learn experientially:

It would be great for some of the seniors to go into places and teach kids different things like rug making and basket making with white ash or black ash. There are lots of illnesses in the city and the older people can't get out to do anything. Most of them are confined to their homes. Even cutting up old rags and making braided rugs with the kids would be a good thing. All of these cultures are dying out and they have to be revived. Some of the people that know how to do those things could be very helpful. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Cooking is one way we can share knowledge. I've also asked the kitchen to set up a workshop on pickling beans or peaches. They could bring their children and teach them how to sterilize the jars and make jam and preserves and beets. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Now we will talk about education and Anishnawbe world vision and how Anishnawbe should be picking up those old ways as a way of creating self worth in our young people. Today's young people, 14 or 15 years old, Anishnawbe kids don't even know how to make fire. If they were lost in the bush, they would probably lose their lives. So, we need to have good teachers and those teachers in those other communities. I know there are still Anishnawbe Nini (men) on n reserve that know how to cut wood and know how to hunt. We need to redevelop all these skills in our youth today. We cannot turn a switch in our minds, to be white. We know, that we need to accept that, one of these times the electricity is going to go off. Then we will have to pick up our own skills, which is how to cut wood, how to keep our family together, how to hunt, how to trap, all of those old skills. We need to teach our young people those skills. The only way we can teach them is to take them out to the bush. Without my bush training, without awakening of senses, that the bush gives, I don't think that I would have survived here in the city. All of those teachings that were given to me, by my mom, about how to be amongst people, and to be quiet, when to call on Spirit, was very very important. (Life History Respondent)

I volunteer at a Native Child camp every year for eight to 10 weeks a year. I like being with the children and being with the earth. The interaction between us bonding that even now, the kids are asking me if I am coming out to camp with them. The kids are still looking for that interaction. Even that one-week interaction is really impacting to their life. That is the type of thing that we need. Those camps are excellent for those things. We could use Elders as well as seniors for those camps. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Elders and seniors focus group respondents also spoke of the need for a cultural and recreational centre for Aboriginal children and youth where their parents and grandparents could go and spend time together and participate in cultural activities and practices.

The children need a recreational centre because they have a lot of energy. A lot of children need that interaction with the adults. The parents need to enjoy the children and work with them. The world is so caught up in working and they are not having time to do this and they take it out on the child. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

From myself, I think it's with the children and grandchildren. Up to five years ago I was in a five-generation family. A problem I see in the city is that there aren't many places for the kids to go after school. If there were more seniors, that would solve the kids things that they made. To me, it is important to be with their children and great grandchildren. It is a lack of places for the kids to go and bond with seniors. They don't have qualified people to run after school programs. They don't have anything for school-aged children. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I lost both my grandparents when I was young so I missed grandparents growing up. I grew up without grandparents but I could see from other kids how important grandparents were. A lot of the little ones around now, they don't have that. Here we are, and a lot of us are not really that busy. If there was some place to go we would be more than happy to spend an afternoon with our grandchildren. Right now, just to get something going we would need a place to go to. I really missed having grandparents. All the things like combing your grandmother's hair, I missed all of that. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

It was further stressed by one respondent that what is needed is a shared space for Elders/seniors and children and youth, not a space that further divides them:

When they created this space for young people, that really upset me. Before the children would meet outside of the auditorium and they could hear the drums and they could come in and participate. Now they don't have that access to those cultural activities. One of the things I grew up with, is when my parents went anywhere, as kids we came with them. If I go somewhere, if my kids can't go, then I don't have any business being there. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

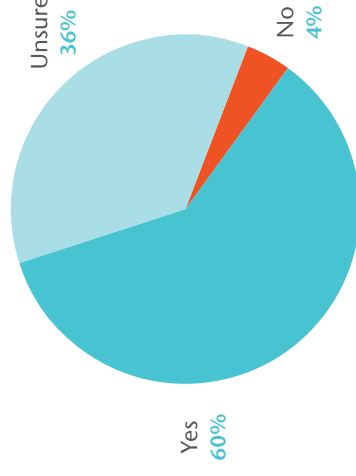
One respondent further added that without these shared spaces and opportunities for Elder/senior and youth interactions and sharing, grandparents are being cut off from their traditional roles of supporting their extended families:

Just recently, we took our grandson out to a birthday party and he invited eight friends and afterwards I spoke with the young people and I asked them if they enjoyed it. They said it was so nice and they said if they were home they would be eating cornflakes, or they would make a sandwich for supper. They said why don't our mothers feed us and give us a meal? We are grandmothers to all of our society. We should be there helping families and feeding the children...this is our job as old people and it breaks my heart that I am not able to do it. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

7.4 Specific Gaps in Services to Aboriginal Elders and Seniors

Overall, a majority (60%) of community survey respondents indicated that there are existing gaps in services to Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto.

Chart 7F: Gaps in Services to Elders and Seniors (Quantitative n=477)



In terms of the third and fifth most important issue facing Elders and seniors identified in Table 7A, several focus group respondents spoke of the need for assisted living services as well as a lack of general senior housing respectively. Although senior housing is available at Wigwamen Housing⁸⁷ in Toronto, many respondents discussed an unmet need for assisted living services as well as for palliative care

We need more nursing home type housing for seniors. We need to build a place for seniors who can't handle living by themselves and for palliative care. We need something through Anishnawbe Health or Nishnawbe Housing. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Several focus group participants also spoke to the need for more programming for Aboriginal Elders and seniors living in Toronto to facilitate community building and socializing. Particular areas of program development included physical activities, cultural activities and card tournaments.

I think it would be an asset for Wigwamen to offer more programs for the seniors to take a short walk in the park or have a small picnic. It would be great to get some of these seniors out. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

⁸⁷ Wigwamen Senior Citizen Housing is available for seniors who are over the age of 59. The rent is on a geared to income basis. Employed seniors pay 30% of their gross income for rent plus utilities, while seniors on social assistance pay rent on an Ontario Ministry approved scale. For more information, see www.wigwamen.com.

Several focus group participants also spoke of their restricted mobility due to a lack of transportation services. More specifically, they spoke of the challenges of using public transportation and the frequently missed medical appointments due to the lack of adequate transportation services.

Transportation is hard for seniors. People miss their appointments because there is no one to take them there. There is no taxi or transportation for seniors to get their appointment. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I don't think that there are a lot of seniors who have a bus pass and the bus can be very difficult if you are not feeling well or you can't climb up the stairs and everybody has to wait for you. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

7.5 The Roles and Supports of Elders in Toronto

As part of their life history interviews, two Elders spoke of their extensive and diverse community development work. Broadly speaking, these respondents spoke of their work as:

- volunteering to be board members for Aboriginal organizations as well as committee members for a variety of community agencies,
- providing spiritual guidance at community meetings through conducting opening and closing smudges,
- giving presentations and talks at colleges, universities, high schools and the prisons,
- providing teachings and counselling to individuals,
- providing opportunities for community members to participate in ceremony, and
- advocating for the advancement and protection of Aboriginal cultures and languages in the city.

I do presentations to universities, to talk about Aboriginal issues, I go to colleges I go to public schools, to talk about our way of life. I go to secondary schools, sometimes I will take a dancer with me, or a drummer from Council Fire, to do a demonstration. I do the same thing if I go to the jails, visitation, or staff training. I will take a drummer with me, and not a dancer. So that is the kind of things I do here in Toronto, and it keeps me very busy. My other roles in the Aboriginal community is that I sit on various committees. I did that for many years, and then somehow people started to see me as an Elder. So I ended up being called to do Elder work. I did a lot of openings, and teachings. It got really heavy with

A fitness club needs to be available. A lot of us are sitting around not doing anything. They could have something more. I would like to see seniors going somewhere where there is a hot tub. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I had a beading program. I had a lot of people in the dining room. We had a painting program in the afternoon and language programs. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I would like to suggest that every Tuesday of every month that different seniors from different cultures come in and we could eat their food and see a movie on their culture. No one has ever been to their country and we don't know what they do. We could learn about all the different communities in the city and we could make friends. We could taste their food and they could taste our food. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

I used to run cribbage and euchre tournaments. I used to send them to all the Native agencies and some groups would come over. I would have tables full of euchre players and I would give all the money back to the winners along with buying prizes. I used to have some help from people who have now passed away. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

One respondent also talked about the feeling of isolation at Wigmamen due to the frequent deaths of residents as well as the necessity of having to keep one's apartment door close due to fire restrictions:

Living in the seniors building, there is such a turnover of people because they are in the final ceremony period. With that turnover of ages, everything changes. People change, things change, so we need something stabilized. You feel isolated. I can see how it can be that way. For myself, I am out myself a lot. Because of the way it is made, you can't open your doors because of the fire code. So when you walk down the hallway, there is no one in that hallway so everyone is contained in their own little apartment. The common area is not used as much as it could be. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Another respondent spoke of the importance of accessibility challenges at Council Fire and the need to ensure that programming venues have the necessary facilities to accommodate Elders and seniors with physical disabilities:

At Council Fire it is hard to get there and socialize because there is no elevator there. That is the hardest part...going up and down the stairs. They used to have bingos there, but you can't get there. Because of the stairs, it is not friendly for seniors. (Elders and Seniors Focus Group)

Native Child and Family Services, I am one of the Elders on the Elders' group. I help out with their programs and I do teachings for them. I also ended up being an elder and a counsellor for Council Fire. That is what I'm doing now, I am doing Elder work and I am a counsellor. As for Aboriginal activities, I am an Elder, I do smudging, purification I guess you call it. I go to sweats and I go fasting. If I put it in a nutshell, I would have to say that I know my ceremonies, and I practice them. (Life History Respondent)

I was an Elder's helper and she encouraged me to be more involved in my traditional teachings. I am also fluent in my Ojibway language and this gave me more confidence as an elder and a teacher. I have volunteered for many organizations for about 60 years now. I have served as a board member and as a Elder for many Aboriginal organizations. I have gone to many Native organizations and given teachings on traditional ceremonies. I've also very strongly advocated for Aboriginal languages. We all need to advocate for the Aboriginal language before we lose them. We especially have to get the young people learning the language. I was asked to sit on the Elders and Traditional Teachers Council at the Native Canadian Centre and continue to this day. I sit as an Elder for E-Spirit school and for Aboriginal Urban Bank of Canada and for the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. I was also asked to do the opening ceremonies at a workshop on self-government in Toronto and this involved a prayer and a smudging ceremony. We used traditional medicines to open the hearts of everyone there to new knowledge. This is a typical practice in our community, and I consider it a great honour to be asked. I was also asked to open the First Nations House at the University of Toronto and then to be their Elder in Residence and to be part of the support service to Native students. As an Elder in residence at First Nations House I really enjoyed my time there. I found the job of counselling students very fulfilling. I was able to help many of them with their language as well. Much of my focus has been on education, building self-esteem in our young people and preserving the language and traditions. This is the key to making history live on. This has always been the root of my journey. (Life History Respondent)

In terms of support for their work, the Elder respondents spoke of their gratitude for the support they received from Creator, their teachers, other Elders and seniors and their families.

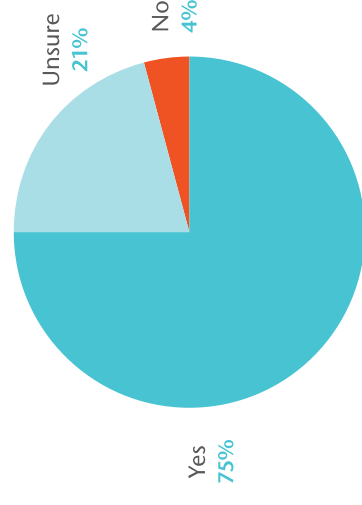
I am happy with my journey. The creator is with me and a great part of my life. I feel that what happened was meant to be so I accept it totally. I feel that my legacy for the future is in preserving the language and culture of our ancestors. I get many visits and phone calls from my family. I am very proud of my three sons and my three daughters in-law and their families. They always take time to visit me. When I was sick they took turns in getting the visiting nurse to look after me, day and night. I have that good family support and my children know that it is

everyone's role to take care of their seniors. I may live alone but they are always with me in my thoughts. (Life History Respondent)

I get a lot of support from visiting Elders here in Toronto. There is one person who comes all the way from Attawapiskat, in the far north. So I get to talk to him in Cree, and I really find that time well spent when I go to see him. He tells me a kinds of stories. He is about 80 years old and he knows lots of stories and legends. I also visit the Elders at Wigwamen Terrace, and they give me support in the way that I do. (Life History Respondent)

What is important to note is that, in spite of a significant majority (75%) of community survey respondents indicating that there is a lack of financial supports for the cultural practices of Elders, Elders themselves did not speak to this in their life history interviews. This perhaps speaks more to the non-material orientation of Elders than it does to the lack of financial resources available to them. This continuing finding points to the need for more research in this area.

Chart 7G: Lack of Financial Support for the Cultural Practices of Elders (Quantitative n=477)



7.6 Aboriginal Elders/Seniors and Discrimination

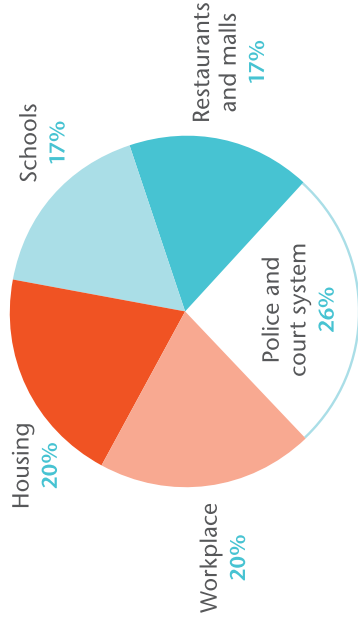
On the question of racism and discrimination, a significant proportion (68%) of Aboriginal Elder/senior community survey and key informant interview respondents indicated that racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people in Toronto is a problem. In their history interviews, two Elders spoke of the prevalence of racism as a problem that needs to be addressed, and the need to actively resist it.

Racism happens with everybody, there is no getting away from it. We don't have to be what those people say. When I went to high school, and when I heard that Native people were dirty, rotten, lazy people and smelly people, I was in shock. People that I knew on the reserve were very clean, super clean people. (Life History Respondent)

You've got to stand your ground. Even though I learned to be humble, there are limits. If there is a racist remark coming from a non-Aboriginal person, I will confront that person. If that is being done to another Aboriginal person, or any other nation, I will stand my ground. I will even challenge my own bishop, if I think he is saying something wrong. (Life History Respondent)

As well, in Chart 7H we see the places where TARP Elders and seniors indicated that racism most often occurs. A significant proportion (26%) indicated that racism most often occurs with the police and the courts followed by in the workplace (20%), in housing (20%), at the schools (17%) and in restaurants and malls (17%).

Chart 7H: Aboriginal Elders/Seniors: Places Where Racism Most Often Occurs (Quantitative n=28)



Three Elder/senior community survey respondents spoke of the pervasiveness of racism as well as some of the specific places where it occurs:

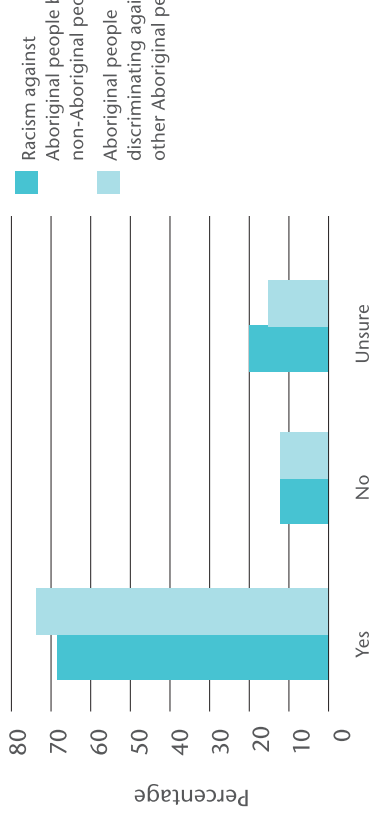
It is everywhere, my kids and my grandkids experience it in all kinds of places. (Community Survey Respondent)

There are real problems with discrimination in the courts as well as when people are looking for housing. (Community Survey Respondent)

I have experienced it in all kinds of places, particularly when I am shopping and using my status card. I get it from both the cashiers and the shoppers. (Community Survey Respondent)

In terms of the prevalence of discrimination against Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people, Chart 7I reveals that for Aboriginal Elder and senior respondents, this form of discrimination is considered more prevalent (73%) than racism against Aboriginal people non-Aboriginal people (68%).

Chart 7I: Racism and Discrimination: Elders/Seniors (Quantitative n=26)



TARP Elder/senior community survey and key informant respondents spoke to this form of discrimination as taking a variety of expressions including:

- the unjust dismissals of Native employees,
- gossip,
- verbal abuse,
- relating to Indian status and national affiliation,
- relating to class and economic success,
- denying access to ceremony, and
- family against family.

As well, TARP Elder/senior community survey and key informant respondents specifically spoke of the discrimination of Aboriginal people

other Aboriginal people in terms of the denial of services, inter-tribal discrimination and resentment and jealousy relating to Indian status and financial standing.

I have seen Native people withholding much-needed services from each other or making other Native people wait unnecessarily for extended periods of time... and just having insulting and uncaring attitudes generally. (Community Survey Respondent)

There is definitely inter-tribal discrimination. People from certain communities will favour each other and tend to live in the same parts of town. (Key Informant Interview Respondent)

Mohawks give preferential treatment to other Mohawks and discriminate against Ojibways...this happens all the time. (Key Informant Interview Respondent)

There are divisions between those who have status and those who do not.... First Nations people discriminate against those who are not from First Nations and those that are educated and have jobs look down on the street people. (Community Survey Respondent)

People can get really jealous of their brother or sister making a better wage and having better living conditions in Toronto. (Community Survey Respondent)

Chapter 8

TWO-SPIRITED ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IN TORONTO

I think that I have two-spirits in me and they both shine brightly and I am very proud of them. (Life History)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- There is a large and complex Aboriginal two-spirited community in Toronto composed of a variety of sexual orientations including gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered people.
- The two-spirited Aboriginal community is very diverse and contains many economically successful 'middle class' individuals as well as people experiencing serious problems who are in need of various support services.
- In traditional Aboriginal societies, two-spirited individuals were respected and honoured but the influences of Christianity and colonialism put an end to any tolerance of different sexual orientations.
- Aboriginal two-spirited individuals tend to be proud of their two-spiritedness and their Aboriginal identity.
- There is a dearth of empirical research on the Aboriginal two-spirited community in Toronto.
- The majority of two-spirited people in Toronto come from reserves or small rural communities where they experienced high rates of homophobia and discrimination.
- 'Coming out' to family and friends is often a difficult process for two-spirited people.
- Having a supportive two-spirit community in the city as well as assistance from agencies and acceptance from both the larger Aboriginal community and general mainstream society are important factors in successful urban adjustment.

- While the situation is improving, homophobia, discrimination and lack of acceptance are issues still faced by some Aboriginal two-spirited people in both the Aboriginal and mainstream communities, especially for transgendered individuals.
- HIV/AIDS and other health problem remain a major concern in the Aboriginal two-spirited community in Toronto.
- There is a need for additional organizations and services designed to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal two-spirited people in Toronto.

Toronto is home to a large and vibrant two-spirited⁸⁸ Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal two-spirited community is not new. Two-spirited Aboriginal people have long existed in Aboriginal societies known by such terms as Winkte, Berdache and Ogoke. The names reflected recognition of the sacredness of two-spirited people who played vital roles in Aboriginal communities including medicine people, warriors, healers and visionaries.

There are individuals documented in our history, men who dressed as women and took husbands and of great women warriors who took wives and carried a bow... Sometimes it meant a dream. A young woman who dreamt of warriors' of hunters' weapon would know her course. Young boys who preferred the company of women, cooking instead of going on the hunt, was also born for a different reason than most. People did not interfere with this.⁸⁹

With the advent of Christianity and colonialism the tolerance for two-spiritedness disappeared. The dominant society's insistence on heterosexuality, supported by church doctrine and community norms, as the only appropriate sexual orientation meant that two-spirited individuals had to hide their sexuality. Over time, many Aboriginal people internalized these negative views of homosexuality in any form making it doubly difficult for two-spirited people to openly express themselves in their families and communities. The emergence of HIV/AIDS as the 'gay disease' in the 1980s, in some cases, compounded the problems faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Aboriginal people in their communities. A survey conducted on Ontario Aboriginal reserves in 1993 discovered that... "the

88 In terms of this report the term 'two-spirited' means Aboriginal people who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered (GLBT).

89 Deschamps, G. (1998). *We are Part of a Tradition: A Guide on Two-spirited People for First Nations Communities*. Toronto: 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, p. 1.

majority of respondents felt that homosexuality was wrong, and received their family and community to support their view."⁹⁰ A study of Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS demonstrates the harm that result from internalized rejection of their sexual orientation.

Two-spirited people...have experienced homophobia related to rejection from family and community...Some individuals experience internalized homophobia...an inability to accept their own sexuality due to judgemental attitude from society in general. Lack of acceptance produces ramifications of substance abuse, sex trade, language barriers, low self-esteem, shame, guilt... lack of safe sex.⁹¹

Today, attitudes have begun to change. Individuals in Aboriginal communities, as a result of such factors as educational and awareness programs and changes in human rights legislation are beginning to recognize and accept two-spirited individuals. At the same time, a great deal remains to be done to attain a situation of full acceptance and recognition. There remains institutional racism and homophobia. Still today, for many two-spirited people coming to urban areas where there is more anonymity and tolerance, as well as a welcoming community, has been a necessary choice to be made. This choice attempts to 'give voice' in their own words to the Aboriginal two-spirited individuals who participated in the TARP study.

8.1 The Two-Spirited Aboriginal Community in Toronto

There is very little systematic empirical research on two-spirited Aboriginal people. Estimates as to how many two-spirited individuals live in Toronto vary greatly from 500 to more than 1,000. Two-spirited community is also very diverse. One key informant stated that the community is divided 50-50 between 'middle class' two-spirited people and those who are living in poverty or who are experiencing problems.

90 Myers, T., Calzavara, L., Cockerill, R., Marshall V., & Bullock, S. (1993). *Ontario First Nations and Health Lifestyle Survey*, p. 42.

91 McLeod, A. & Treasure, P. (1993). *Care and Treatment of Aboriginal People with HIV/AIDS*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force.

In the TARP sample, 18 people, or 2.1% identified themselves as two-spirited (out of a total sample of 835). This chapter reports on the questions in the community survey and interview guide pertaining to two-spirited issues. In addition, a focus group and life histories with four, two-spirited individuals were conducted to gain a qualitative understanding of the situation of two-spirited Aboriginal people living in Toronto. To round out the analysis, a number of studies, including a study in Winnipeg⁹², relating to two-spirited people, were examined for comparative purposes.

The life histories of individuals illustrate many of the complex and diverse characteristics of being two-spirited and Aboriginal in Toronto. Clearly, the term encompasses individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, transgendered and bi-sexual as well as from every Aboriginal group and social class and area in Toronto. Some individuals who participated in the life histories were clear on what being two-spirited means:

I love the term because it applies to me. I'm very much two-spirited but I don't think that everyone should call themselves two-spirited. I think it comes with a duty. You have to have a duty, you have to have a role in the community because two-spirited does not necessarily mean gay. I think that I have two-spirits in me and they both shine brightly and I am very proud of them. (Life History)

Being two-spirited to me is more than just identifying as a woman who loves another woman. Being two-spirited has an implication of spiritual and social roles within the Cree culture...There was a bit of contrariness...they would have been warrior women of the past, teachers, history keepers, medicine men and women, marriage counsellors, people who were skilled in crafts. For me especially, I think being two-spirited means I am taking on caretaker and teacher roles in my community, and I am probably a warrior against the fight against HIV/AIDS in our community. (Life History)

The life histories of individuals who came from reserves or rural communities illustrate the difficulties of growing up in a place of non-acceptance:

I got beat up every day...School also had lots of 'cowboys' and 'Indians', and there were bullies so I was also beat up at school...While coming out, I was vulnerable

to violence of others. I was blamed for everything and beaten up. If a cup broke then I got beat up. I helped my grandmother a lot and she was my best friend. She always accepted me. She was the referee... I didn't feel safe. I had the 'us' 'them' feeling...On the reserve you know everyone's life history...I wished to get the reserve every day. I will never go back...I had to physically move away just to be me. (Life History)

People were grossed out by gay. There was really no one out as a gay person there...There were no gay people there...well there were but they were not willing to talk about it...So it was a big struggle for me growing up...In school other kids would push me around and pick on me... Because I had long hair, everyone used to think I was a girl...When I was 13 I shaved off all my hair because I was just sick and tired of being made fun of. (Life History)

Well growing up in Northern Ontario, it was a pretty homophobic environment. Lots of derogatory gay jokes, and I don't think I knew anyone who was out up there, who wasn't made fun of, or treated badly. So once I realized that I was I thought "I can't live there (small city in Northern Ontario)". (Life History)

'Coming out' as a two-spirited person can often be difficult and for some, means cutting ties with family. For others, families can be open and supportive:

My dad somehow knew what I was going through at this time of my life. My dad was the first person I came out to when I was 17 or 18...Yeah it was big, it was a big moment. But he always...they always knew. (Life History)

Most people who knew me growing up are very surprised that I ended up two-spirited. A bit of a shock... I struggled for a long time and even had suicidal thoughts. Because you know I grew up Catholic, not that I was institutionalized Catholic...But all those things were instilled in there... and I always thought "the hell with them...I can be ok with you no problem". But when it applied to me I was like "shit I don't want that"... And then the whole family thing...I thought "ok I am going to tell my mother because I need to tell her". So I told her...And like she was "ok I gave her a hug and said "well I love you mom" and she said "I love you too, you are my creation", which is the perfect thing to say because I knew how hard it was for her, as a woman who is a very strong Catholic, to still love me...So that was good so once I knew that hurdle was over everything else was really easy. (Life History)

For many two-spirited people, therefore, moving to a larger centre, particularly Toronto where there is a large established LGBT community, was the desirable option but not without its challenges in adjusting.

So I knew I had to make a decision to move to Southern Ontario to find work. But it was more important to find out what it was like to be gay in a good environment

92 The study interviewed and conducted focus groups with 24 two-spirited individuals, Janice Ristock, Art Zoccole and Lisa Passante, *Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Migration, Mobility and Health Research Project: Winnipeg Final Report, 2010.*

and to find a partner, basically...But I love the opportunities that were in Toronto... We went to two plays. That was cool because I'd never been to the theatre before... Doing different things that the city can offer was good. (Life History)

At the time of my coming out, I was partying, taking lots of drugs, crystal meth, 'e', and had bad health problems... My friend asked me to attend the Two-Spirit Gathering for about a week. I had no idea what it would be like...I went to the gathering and it was 'the best experience of my life'. Where were you guys all my life? Through Two-Spirit Gatherings I made many friends...After the gathering I sold my car for \$50 and drove to Toronto. I got dropped off in Toronto and stayed there. In Toronto I worked the streets and then worked for an Aboriginal organization...I had no preparation for moving to Toronto...I had no contacts here before. I went to the 2-Spirited organization...and they helped me by referring me to social service agencies. At first I was on welfare and struggled to find a job. I was so used to being 'passed around' as a kid. I am used to adapting to a new environment. (Life History)

I envisioned moving to Toronto while on a family trip when I was 12, and when I was 18 I moved to Toronto after having been accepted into an educational program...I first lived in a 'real sketchy area', next door to a strip club with 'crack heads' all over the neighbourhood...I had to adjust to the city, and it was huge... home sickness and the program had a big toll on me actually...coming out of the closet...there were so many things happening in my life and they took a toll on me. I started to suffer from post-traumatic stress which gave me anxiety. I was dealing with all that and I was coming to school. (Life History)

Obtaining employment was challenging. It took me four to five years to really adapt. Before acquiring a job at an Aboriginal agency, I did everything from bartending, to construction, to cleaning in the SkyDome, to working for Labour Ready just to pay the bills. (Life History)

Becoming part of a larger Aboriginal two-spirited community was an important part of coming to Toronto.

But I got involved in the Native gay community first, which makes sense, this is why Aboriginal gay people come to big centres like Toronto. Because we are looking for the gay community. And a lot of us will look for the Native community, inside that community. I immersed myself in the Native gay community, and I found kinship and understanding. And I didn't have to explain anything and that's been really good. (Life History)

The main thing between my closest friends is the fact that they are all Aboriginal because we have some sort of understanding already about being Aboriginal, and the same experience of pushing our way through life and society. We already have

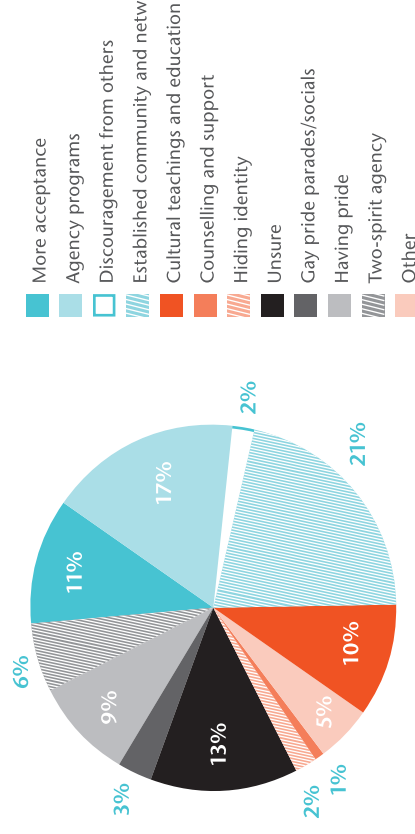
that connection. We already know what it's all about so we don't have to describe it to somebody- or tell somebody how it is. That's how we're close...I feel more with them actually. (Life History)

We are definitely coming to a space where we are saying, "these are my traditions" and "this is my ancestral cultural tie in". I am an individual artist, I am the things I am referencing...people are getting much more with their own cultural ancestral systems...Now it is, "she's Mohawk, and she needs to tell the story". (Life History)

In addition, Aboriginal two-spirited individuals also participate in non-Aboriginal GLBT community and have non-Aboriginal friends. They are also active in the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto.

When the total TARP sample was asked to name the success factors for Aboriginal two-spirited people in Toronto, a number of factors were mentioned as illustrated in Chart 8A.

Chart 8A: Success Factors for Two-Spirited People Living in Toronto/GTA (Quantitative n=208)



The most important factor mentioned was having an established community and network. As stated earlier, being able to be with people who understand your situation who are supportive and share your views and attitudes, whether it is the two-spirited community or the larger Aboriginal community, is critical for the solidarity and cohesion of

potentially vulnerable group. Participants in the two-spirited focus group made it clear that being identified as two-spirited was as important as being Aboriginal. These two parts of identity are inseparable.

The support that two-spirited individuals receive from agency programs was also seen as important. The work of the organization 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations was seen as particularly significant. It is one of the few organizations that work primarily with two-spirited Aboriginal people (see below and TARP Case Study Report). Many two-spirited people in Toronto require various services to attempt to stay healthy.

A third factor mentioned by respondents relates to that fact that there is currently more acceptance of Aboriginal two-spirited people than previously, both in the larger Aboriginal community and the society at large. Indeed, the need for acceptance was the most frequently mentioned need among the TARP key informants. An individual's identity and self esteem is affected by both how they see themselves and how they are viewed by others. With greater acceptance comes more self acceptance and a strong sense of self.

Fourth, Aboriginal culture was stated as being another important success factor, including the need to recognize the positive role two-spirited Aboriginal people played in the past.

Acceptance of them. Traditionally we honoured and respected them. There is a misunderstanding of the term; it's become a synonym for gay/lesbian. In the past however, being two-spirited did not necessarily mean one would be in a same-sex relationship, or that people in a same-sex relationship were two-spirited. (Key Informant Interview)

8.2 Challenges Faced by Two-Spirited People in Toronto

While Toronto offers a great deal of positive experiences and there has been an increase of acceptance of people over the past few years, there remain many significant challenges for a large number of Aboriginal two-spirited individuals.

8.2.1 Homophobia and Discrimination

There remains a great deal of homophobia and discrimination against two-spirited Aboriginal people both within the mainstream and Aboriginal communities. When asked whether discrimination against two-spirited people is a serious problem, of those who answered (n=200), 88% replied in the affirmative. Some suggest that, in some cases, Aboriginal Elders have negative attitudes toward two-spirited individuals.

So now there's this idea of what is Aboriginality and I think there's external racism there's internal racism and I think we need to liberate ourselves internally before the outside world can accept the differences within our circle too. (Life History)

Being a two-spirited person is a different way of identifying in Toronto...and so are already separating ourselves a little bit because of homophobia...And so even though I am constantly asserting myself as a Aboriginal person, as a Cree person and a two-spirit person, by doing that I am also separating myself from the other parts of the Aboriginal community. Work wise, I try to spread myself everywhere but socially it is impossible because of homophobia. Because I am never just an Aboriginal person anymore, I am always two-spirited. (Life History)

We live in a neighbourhood ...where there is a high tolerance for people who are not straight, No one has said anything about us being a gay couple and lesbian parents. But our friend from a nearby suburb, who was active in a Queer Parenting group...experienced a lot of homophobia, so much that they moved. (Life History)

...and if you are a vulnerable person like a woman or a very effeminate man, a drink so much so you pass out. Make sure someone is looking after you, to be your lookout, so you don't get gang banged, or whatever. It's not right. I'm not going to tell anybody else what to do, but I might have suggestions about how to do things a little bit more safely. (Life History)

Especially in the Aboriginal community, they can say something to your face to be polite...But then it's the whole turn around thing and they keep it to themselves and that's fine...I don't get a lot of the verbal assaults that other people get. And certainly because I am a woman, I don't get a lot of the physical threats or harassment that other people get. Because I know that some people have been beaten up and assaulted because they are gay. (Life History)

I am two-spirited, but I am still Aboriginal. That is the kicker; it's like we are a group within a sub-group. It's like we are all facing the same issues day in and day out, we all feel the same. It's like "let's just work together, instead of us against

them.” This mentality of us against them is damaging. We are two-spirited but we are also Aboriginal. (Two-Spirited Focus Group)

It is critical that housing is located within the downtown area due to multiple safety concerns. Areas beyond the parameters of downtown are considered unsafe, i.e. anything past Pape or Roncesvalles is too far and too unsafe. (Two-spirited Focus Group)

It is an issue for certain jobs. When people find out you are two-spirited they might look at you in a different way. (Two-spirited Focus Group)

For two-spirited individuals who are transgendered the problem of homophobia is particularly serious.

In terms of safety, homophobia is everywhere. It could be in a look. For example, airport security, border officials, etc. Officials in positions of institutional authority have the power to make judgements based on your physical appearance. In terms of his ID, authority figures may ask “why does it say male? You look like a girl” ... There’s a constant reminder I’m different. It’s too unusual for people. (Life History)

I just don’t feel comfortable if I am in a group of men or a group of women. When I am in a men’s ceremony, they say “oh, there will be a full moon ceremony soon. Go to that”. If I go to a full moon ceremony then all the women will go “how come there’s a man in here?” ... I don’t know where I fit in. (Two-Spirited Focus Group)

Security is an issue. We face discrimination and violence on public transportation at late hours when travelling home, particularly if returning from bars, or if they do not consider ‘passing’ in their chosen gender identification. (Two-spirited Focus Group)

Another place where homophobia is a serious issue is in the education system, particularly in high schools where students are in the process of sexual orientation/gender identity formation. Additional supports for two-spirited students should be strengthened in high schools and post secondary institutions.

Focus group participants and life history individuals also spoke of homophobia within some Aboriginal organizations. Some key informants suggested that even though many Aboriginal organizations have a ‘non-discrimination’ policy, in some cases it is not rigorously followed as it pertains to two-spirited people.

I’ve had to deal with certain homophobic things that were taking place at an Aboriginal organization. So it wasn’t like I wanted to go there and be social there

after having to deal with homophobia. And it wasn’t the people that were the workers. (Life History)

It starts with the receptionist in an Aboriginal organization who is homophobic and continues with others who are also homophobic. I have been ‘turned off’ by organizations due to homophobia, and will not go back. It’s a big problem. It stops two-spirited people from accessing Aboriginal organizations....They often say ‘don’t you go to 2-Spirits?’ instead of offering an inclusive space within the agencies. (Life History)

It should be noted that not all Aboriginal two-spirited individuals experience homophobia or discrimination. A number of well-educated economically successful two-spirited people have successfully created their identity in positive terms and successfully participated both the general Aboriginal community as well as the Toronto G community. Little empirical research exists relating to this group.

8.2.2 HIV/AIDS and Other Health Issues

HIV/AIDS and other related health issues are significant problems for two-spirited Aboriginal people. It is also a topic that has been researched somewhat more than most issues in the Aboriginal community due to the seriousness of the problem.⁹³ Indeed, although the numbers of HIV/AIDS cases among Aboriginal people is not known, the Laboratory for Disease Control reported that, in 1998, the numbers are increasing and there is an epidemic among Aboriginal people.

*Aboriginal people are infected earlier than non-Aboriginal people, that injective drug use is an important mode of transmission, and the HIV epidemic among Aboriginal people shows no signs of abating.*⁹⁴

Individuals with HIV/AIDS face multiple issues that can seriously affect their lives. Even the most menial everyday activities such as walking safely in the streets, taking public transportation, obtaining stable affordable housing, applying for a job and obtaining assistance for

93 Two excellent studies of HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal people are: Stefan Mlatiation, *HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal People*, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 1999; and LaVern Monette, Darcy Albert and Judith Waalen, *Voices of Two-Spirited Men*, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, 2001.

94 Health Canada. (1998). *Epi Update: HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Among Aboriginal People in Canada*. Ottawa: Laboratory Centre for Disease Control.

a social service agency can be a challenge. In addition, many people with HIV/AIDS are characterized by having multiple physical and mental health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, Hepatitis C, depression, anxiety and addiction. Financial stability is a major issue. They are also heavily involved with the health system with its associated stresses. Seeing the impact that HIV/AIDS can have is a challenge.

And we have to focus on those positives because working in the HIV field can be very depressing because people are dying. People that we end up having friendships and relationships with pass away, so it can be very depressing to watch that happen. (Life History)

I've lost so many friends, and we've lost a lot of artists – famous and non-famous – people who have died before their time. I try to educate my students about this illness that hasn't left us. (Life History)

The major agency which provides support for HIV/AIDS people is 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. It has been in existence for 20 years (see: Toronto Research Project Case Study Report for a case study of the agency). It began as a social organization but, as with the case with many Aboriginal agencies, the pressing social problems forced it to change its focus to providing social services. It is a small agency with 3.5 staff and 80 volunteers providing multiple services to HIV positive clients including counselling, referrals, assisting with housing, providing transportation, outreach work, home visits, community development, research, facilitating awareness workshops, liaison with first Nation communities and public speaking. The agency is viewed very positively in the Aboriginal two-spirited community but does not have the capacity to meet the huge demand for services. And like many small Aboriginal organizations, it is burdened by heavy administrative, reporting and evaluation demands from funders. In addition, the space is inadequate to hold social and cultural events.

Yet the 2-Spirited People organization focuses on people who are HIV positive and there remains a need for organizations to meet the social and cultural needs of the larger two-spirited community in Toronto. When the total sample of the TARP study was asked whether there were any gaps in services for urban Aboriginal two-spirit and transgendered people living in Toronto/GTA, of those who answered the question (n=174), the vast majority (87.9%) replied in the affirmative. Further,

89.8% of those who answered (n=216) stated that an Aboriginal two-spirit and transgendered organization would be best able to meet social and cultural needs of two-spirited and transgendered people. Finally, 80% of TARP respondents who answered (n=185) claimed there was a lack of safe events or spaces where two-spirit people practice their Aboriginal culture in Toronto.

It is clear that there is a perception that an organization and event specifically for two-spirited people are required. And as was the case with other Aboriginal groups, there was a preference for an Aboriginal operated organization. Also, as is the case for the Aboriginal middle class generally, there is a desire for a non-service oriented organization for economically successful two-spirited people to gather and engage in social and cultural events and activities.

Numerous suggestions were made by study participants as to the methods and services that are required to more effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal two-spirited people including a larger building with meeting rooms, recreational space and a kitchen to hold larger gatherings, drum groups, services for children and families, programs for seniors, a residential housing program, employment services, life skills workshops, additional medical services and an addictions treatment center.

The TARP study has attempted to give voice to two-spirited individuals. They have articulated a picture of their lives including the challenges they face in Toronto. In many ways, they constitute a forgotten group within the Toronto Aboriginal community. Some are living healthy, productive lives and participating in the benefits that a large two-spirited community has to offer. Others are suffering with a substantial GLBT community has to offer. Additional research is required to more fully understand the aspirations, challenges and circumstances of this group. It is hoped that this research has served to increase the understanding and highlight the importance of the Aboriginal two-spirited community in Toronto.



ABORIGINAL POVERTY AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES

Poverty is very difficult and a lot of people don't know how to change things for themselves. Planning and budgeting can be really difficult. Sometimes we get really stuck and our thinking can become very negative.

(Poverty and Social Services Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- Poverty is multi-faceted and is a determinant of success and well being across all social issues.
- A large proportion of Aboriginal people in Toronto earn under \$40,000 per year.
- Household income and employment are closely linked and many Aboriginal people in Toronto face challenges in finding full-time, permanent employment. This is also a significant challenge for Aboriginal women specifically those who are single mothers.
- Single Aboriginal people face challenges with income, with a high proportion earning less than \$20,000 per year and one in three families live below the poverty line.
- There is a large proportion of Aboriginal people in Toronto who are transitioning from less stable lives (life on the streets, in shelters or in addictions treatment) who struggle significantly with poverty which makes them vulnerable to returning to their previous circumstances.

Urban Aboriginal poverty is an issue facing many people across many cities in Canada and Toronto is no exception. Poverty does not exist in isolation of other life factors, and is a determinant of quality of life in many ways including health. The interconnected nature of poverty was evident throughout this research. Also evident was the multiple

organizations working diligently to address poverty-related issues remove barriers to success for Aboriginal community members living in Toronto. The theme of poverty was discussed in various focus groups, key informant interviews, life histories, organizational studies and the community survey. This chapter reflects how community members see poverty expressed and the challenges in addressing this prevailing issue.

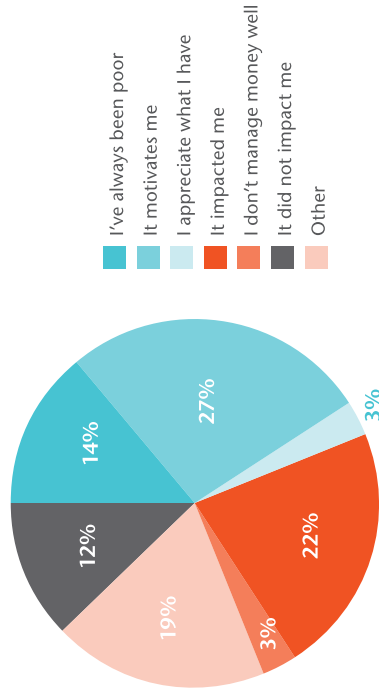
Toronto is home to a wide range of Aboriginal social support services to address the needs of the community. Many of these organizations work closely together to ensure that community members receive adequate support in various facets of their lives from housing, child and family services to justice. In addition to the support services, there are many other organizations that provide support programming such as those within the arts community such as ImagiNATIVE and the Centre for Indigenous Theatre. The following is a brief list of Aboriginal social support services in Toronto: Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, Anduhyaun Women's Shelter, Anishnabe Health, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, Gabriel Dumont Native Profit Homes, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Native Women's Family Services of Toronto, Native Men's Residence, Native Women's Resource Centre, Nishnawbe Homes, Miziwe Biik Employment Training, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, and Wigwamen. Each of these is described briefly. Each of these can be found at the end of this chapter in more detail.

9.1 Major Themes in Poverty and Social Services

Poverty is an issue that is considered systemic. Many Aboriginal people experienced poverty growing up as children, and due to their circumstances and choices and institutional and societal barriers, they have remained within the cycles of poverty. For others, experienced poverty motivated them to pursue opportunities and enhance their circumstance. This was evident in the qualitative response when asked whether poverty affected current lifestyle. Chart 9A describes how respondents felt their childhood growing up in poverty expressed itself in their current situation and indicates the varying responses

such as “it motivates me” (27%) compared to “it did not impact me” (12%). Other responses such as “I’ve always been poor” (14%) or “I don’t manage money well” (3%) show the inter-generational effect of poverty. Note that only 12% of interview respondents indicated that growing up in poverty did not impact them, while the remaining respondents indicated some type of impact on their lives.

Chart 9A: Did Growing Up in Poverty Affect Your Current Lifestyle? (Quantitative n=74)



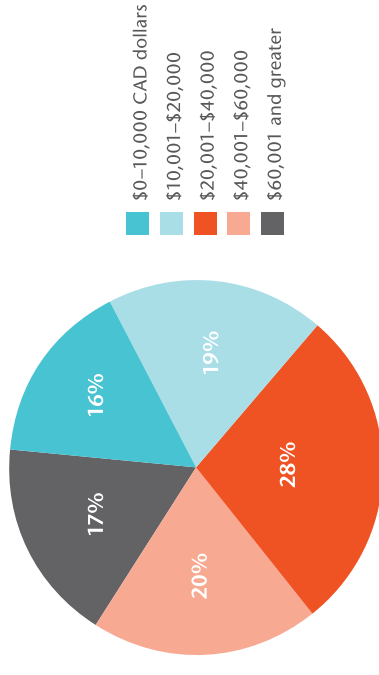
The major themes that emerged from the data include household income, employment, transition issues and gaps in poverty support services. Within the theme of employment, two specific sub-themes emerged: women and employment and non-permanent employment. Within the theme of gaps in poverty support services, the sub-major themes that emerged include housing, transition and life skills, information sharing, Aboriginal focused services and international Indigenous people.

9.1.1 Household Income

The quantitative data revealed important information regarding total family income. Chart 9B shows us that the majority of the respondents from the community survey (63%) have a total family income of less than \$40,000 per year. Those earning in between \$40,000 and

\$60,000 per year total 20% and only 17% have a total family income greater than \$60,000 per year. When comparing this to the median total family income for Toronto, 2008 figures from Statistics Canada indicate that the median income is \$68,120 per year. This includes couple families with or without children and lone parent families.

Chart 9B: Total Household Income (Quantitative n=793)



The community survey, as illustrated in Chart 9C, also indicates that those family households that are comprised of a single adult male situation earn less than those in married or common law households. This makes sense as more than one income earner in the household increases the total family income. What is significant is when we look at the total family incomes for the general population of Toronto. According to Statistics Canada in 2008, households comprised of a lone male parent have an average income of \$45,752 per year and households comprised of a lone female parent have an average income of \$32,345 per year.⁹⁶

According to the community survey, 72% of single Aboriginal respondents earn less than \$40,000 per year and 55% earn less than \$20,

95 Statistics Canada. (2010). Table 111-0009: Median total income, by family type, by census metropolitan area, CANSIM. Retrieved from E-stat.

96 Statistics Canada. (2010). Table 111-0009: Median total income, by family type, by census metropolitan area, CANSIM. Retrieved from E-stat.

per year. The total household income of lone parent families with children living at home is indicated in Chart 9D. From this data we see that 63% of single lone parent families earn less than \$40,000 per year. Of the divorced or separated lone parent families, the data indicates that 50% of respondents earn over \$40,000 per year, and only 27% of them earn over \$60,000 per year. The higher incomes for divorced or separated families may be attributed to spousal and child support payments.

Chart 9C: Total Family Income vs. Marital Status (Quantitative n=789)

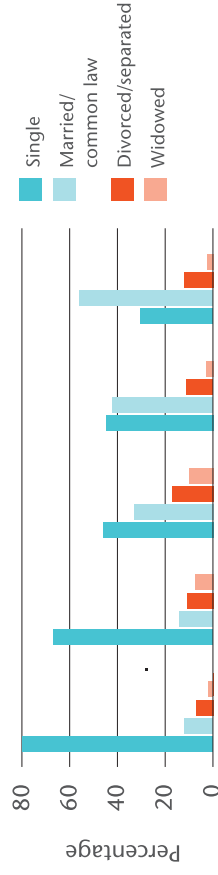
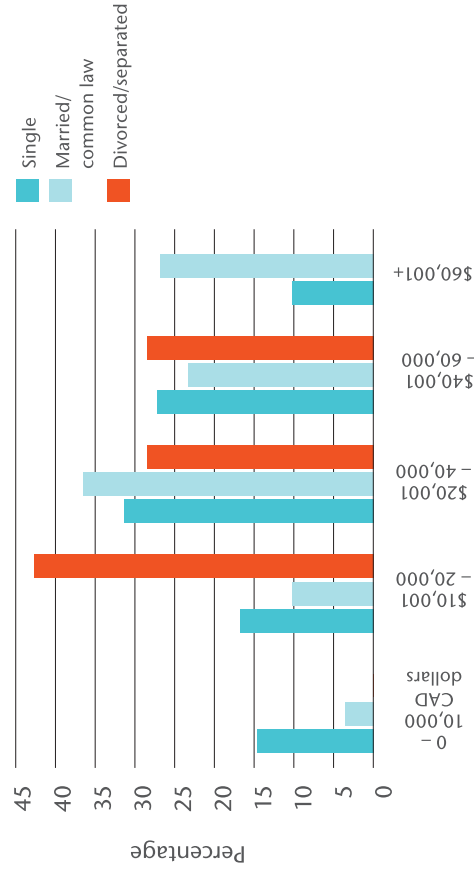


Chart 9D: Single Parent Households by Total Family Income (Quantitative n=789)



The 2008 homelessness report by Ward and Associates also reveals that there are many hard working Aboriginal people; however they are trapped in poverty. They found that one in three households have annual incomes below the poverty line.⁹⁷ The lower level income may be related to a number of factors including education levels, parents who choose to stay at home and look after children occupation type. Lower family income places a number of barriers on families in terms of their economic mobility, health status and opportunities for their children. As one young parent stated:

Becoming a parent definitely doesn't fit along the lines of saving money. The way we get just kind of covers ourselves and what we need. (At Risk Youth Focus Group)

These are complex issues that will be explored throughout this chapter and throughout this report.

9.1.2 Employment

Respondents had various experiences with employment. Those experiencing economic success related such success to factors such as completing post secondary education and family support. Many others experienced unstable employment, specifically with regard to contractual employment. Being funded through various organizations resulted in year to year contracts, or less, making it difficult to secure stable housing and plan economically for the future. Women specifically faced challenges in terms of employment as well as young

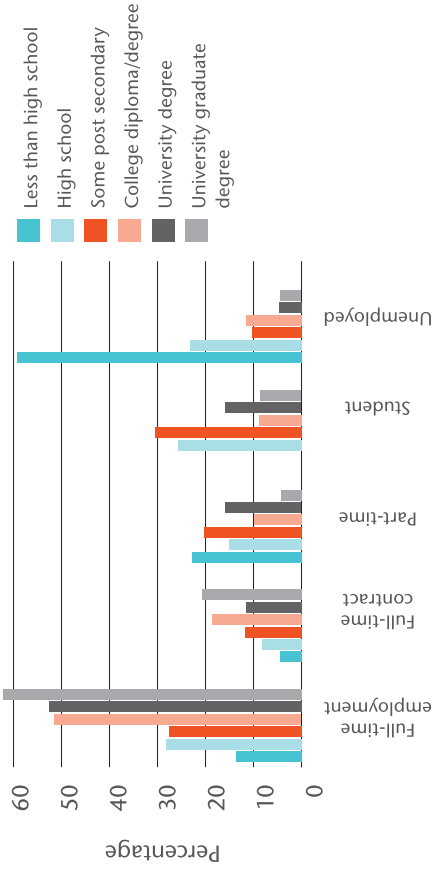
9.1.2.1 Women and Employment

The community survey revealed that 42% of female respondents were employed in full-time permanent positions and 13% were employed in full-time contract positions, 14% were employed in part-time positions, 17% were students and 14% were unemployed. Only 55% of female respondents work full time. Of the 472 Aboriginal women respondents, 62% have children. Fifty-six percent (56%) of

Aboriginal women who have children at home are single, divorced or separated. This indicates that a large proportion of women are working full time to support their children. This is a significant amount of economic pressure on Aboriginal women in Toronto.

The data also revealed that there is a correlation between education level and employment status for Aboriginal women. The community survey results as indicated in Chart 9E show that women with a university graduate degree, university degree or college diploma were more likely to have full-time permanent jobs compared to women who had some post secondary education, high school education or less than high school completion. Increased education inevitably results in more employment opportunity and higher earning potential.

Chart 9E: Employment Status And Education Level For Aboriginal Women (Quantitative n=383)



The issues for Aboriginal women and their employment status are beyond their commitments to raising children as single mothers or their education levels. Some women described the employment challenges they have as relating to their own sense of self-worth. One respondent described this as:

Self esteem issues will stop native women from going and applying for jobs. They think that they will be judged because they are native. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Women also experience employment challenges due to their experiences of discrimination against Aboriginal people. One respondent expressed this as:

Employment is an issue because the employers stereotype you and think you are just alcoholics. They'll say "will you make it here in time?" If I can do the work if I have the skills, then I should be hired. I can prove myself to the employer. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

The result is that many Aboriginal women face multiple pressures when it comes to supporting their family, often as single parents in some cases transitioning to an urban centre, and trying to secure employment.

9.1.2.2 Non-Permanent Employment

The difficulties in securing permanent employment were indicated by a proportion of respondents. From the community survey, we see that 40% of respondents had full-time permanent jobs and 12% were in part-time contract positions, and 14% were in part-time positions. The 40% in full-time permanent jobs, 61% had a total family income of greater than \$40,000 per year and 28% had a total family income greater than \$60,000 per year.

Table 9A Employment Status by Income (Quantitative n=600)

CAD DOLLARS	FULL-TIME PERMANENT	FULL-TIME CONTRACT	PART-TIME	STUDENT	UNEMPLOYED
\$0 – \$10,000	0%	1%	16%	32%	52%
\$10,001 – \$20,000	3%	4%	36%	34%	28%
\$20,001 – \$40,000	35%	38%	31%	19%	14%
\$40,001 – \$60,000	33%	34%	13%	5%	3%
\$60,001 +	28%	22%	5%	10%	4%

For Aboriginal people who are employed through training programs, their positions are only short term, usually within one year. For those who work in social service agencies, the agencies themselves often operate with little core funding and are reliant on annual funding applications, resulting in unstable employment. One respondent expressed frustration in finding permanent employment:

There are temp agencies. There are more temp agencies now that you're guaranteed work from, but they take half your money. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Finding permanent employment is also an issue for those who are attempting to improve their current situation and transition to a permanent housing situation or a life free from addictions. Having the security of a permanent job can become critical in securing permanent and safe housing.

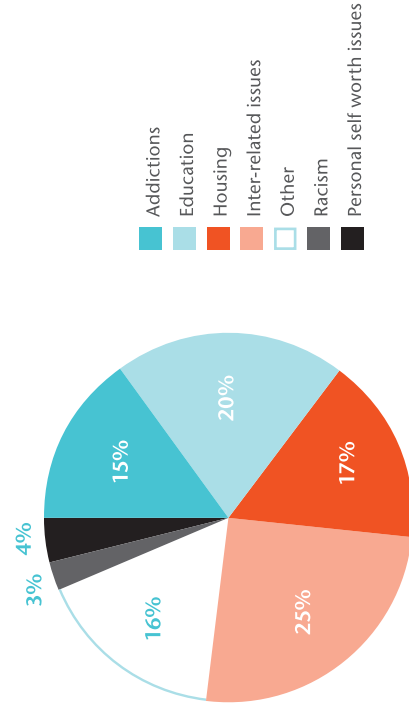
9.1.3 Transition issues

For many of the respondents, the experience of transitioning from a shelter, life on the street, incarceration, or a drug/alcohol rehabilitation centre can be difficult and inevitably result in multiple issues relating to poverty. Much of this is related to the development of life skill sets to ensure they are adequately equipped to handle the complexities of daily living.

Transition issues were also a large part of the discussion in the 2008 report on homelessness by Ward and Associates. Respondents in this research indicated that it was necessary for the “provision of more transitional housing programs with ongoing supports, including education for success in urban life” and the “development of programs that will more effectively prepare Aboriginals for a successful urban life”.⁹⁸ These type of measures are an important part of building the capacity of Aboriginal people in adjusting to life in an urban setting, specifically if they are transitioning from shelters, incarceration or treatment centres.

Questions around the source of poverty were asked in both interviews and community surveys. Poverty was also a major theme in many of the life histories. The interview responses indicated that poverty was due to inter-related issues primarily (25%), but also due to education (20%), housing (17%) and addictions (15%). The interview data provided interesting information on the perceptions around the major causes of poverty as shown in Chart 9F. It is notable that a high percentage recognized that poverty was interconnected with many of the issues such as addictions, housing and education. Poverty is an issue that is not situated in isolation. Along with poverty arise many issues such as housing, lack of employment, limited education and skills, potential addiction issues and impacts to children and youth.

Chart 9F Major Causes of Aboriginal Poverty in Toronto/GTA (Qualitative n=79)



The homeless population of Toronto is explored in this report in a separate chapter. However, issues facing the homeless Aboriginal population are equally as prevalent for those who are transitioning from a homeless situation to a more permanent housing arrangement. The data indicated that there are significant gaps in that transition. In order to be permanently housed, one must have an ongoing stable income. In most cases this means employment, and in other cases it may mean more permanent income such as disability payments. Regardless of where the income is coming from, respondents

98 Jim Ward Associates. (2008). *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto*. Toronto: Jim Ward Associates.

indicated that there were significant challenges in managing that money to ensure that they can remain in their housing situation and have adequate food. One respondent indicated that challenge:

When you are homeless you are not in a place of financial power or stability. We need to know how to manage a budget, we need to know what to do with the money we get, how to save our money; how to pay our bills on time.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

Some organizations like Na-Me-Res provide follow up services that slowly transition their clients from a shelter situation to a more permanent housing situation which involves the monitoring of their income to ensure that their situations are not jeopardized. One respondent described their after-care program:

Na-Me-Res has a good after-care program where workers go to the homes to make sure that the people have food. Visiting more often is how it can be improved. Increasing the dollars to increase the amount of workers and visits.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

Other organizations like Council Fire also provide such services. One respondent described training opportunities they provide to a specific group of people:

At Council Fire, we provide some services for those coming out of prisons. Life skills are providing that opportunity for our community members. (Homelessness Focus Group)

9.1.4 Gaps in Poverty Social Services

Attempting to understand the gaps in the social services were done through the focus groups, community surveys and key informant interviews. It was clear that the need for Aboriginal specific services was strong, however many respondents indicated that they also used non-Aboriginal social services to address some of their needs. This section will discuss some of these gaps as they relate to housing, training and life skills, information sharing, Aboriginal specific support services and international Indigenous people.

Aboriginal service organizations are an important part of Aboriginal community. There are numerous social service agencies the services specifically for Aboriginal people, but also many organizations that have special programs for Aboriginal people. Environics report also indicated the importance of Aboriginal services and organizations to Aboriginal community members. They found that almost 70% of respondents often or occasionally rely on Aboriginal services in Toronto. They also found that the primary users of the services were First Nations people (75%) compared to Métis and Inuit people.⁹⁹

9.1.4.1 Housing

The research revealed that many Aboriginal people consider themselves to have stable housing. The interview data revealed that 10% of respondents felt that housing was a major gap in poverty services (Chart 9G). However, for those who face housing challenges, it indicated that there are an insufficient number of Aboriginal housing units to support the current need. Specifically they spoke about the excessive waiting lists, as well as the need for Aboriginal housing to support more traditional families rather than mainstream nuclear families. The ease in which one can find themselves homeless was also discussed. The ‘working poor’ or those who are unable to secure affordable housing due to low vacancy rates were also discussed by respondents. One respondent discussed their experience:

I was homeless myself about seven years ago. I was telling my son about this, he asked me if we were homeless because I didn't have a job. I told him there was no affordable housing where I was living. As a professional, it was embarrassing for me to go to a service and say I was homeless. How can I be homeless? I consider myself an educated person, how could I be homeless. That's really a myth. (Homelessness Focus Group)

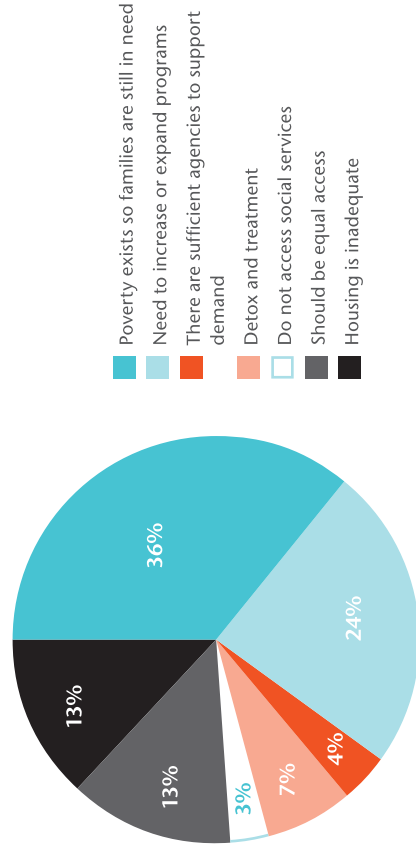
Housing agencies also discussed the challenges in finding funding to support the complex needs surrounding housing people, specifically

those in transition from shelter or street life to a housing situation. One respondent indicated:

More housing from Nishnawbe Homes is needed with more support.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

Organizations like Nishnawbe Homes Inc. are taking innovative steps in partnering with other Aboriginal agencies, such as Miziwe Biik Development Corporation to increase the Aboriginal housing units in the city. In addition, the need for housing that met the unique needs of two-spirited people was discussed by respondents.

Chart 9G: Gaps in Poverty Services to Aboriginal People (Qualitative n=65)



9.1.4.2 Transition and Life Skills

For those in transition from life on the streets, in a shelter, incarceration or an addictions treatment facility, to a normal life, many life skills are lacking that often jeopardizes their successful transition. One respondent indicated where some of the critical gaps lie for those in transition:

There are barriers to getting employment that are both seen and unseen. How can I go to a job interview if I don't have clean clothes or a way of getting there? It

would be good if these kinds of supports were part of the Ontario Works program. I might have a chance if things were better coordinated. (Poverty and Social Services Focus Group)

In some cases, such services are provided, but respondents indicated that there is a much greater need for such services than there is a supply.

9.1.4.3 Information Sharing

Aboriginal community members in Toronto actively use the social services. Seventy percent (70%) of respondents indicated that they use Aboriginal social services in Toronto. There are many Aboriginal organizations that exist in Toronto, some of which are directed at social support services, while others focus on economic development or arts. The need for Aboriginal community members to be apprised of programs and services at the various organizations requires considerable knowledge about how to access the information. It is also reliant on Aboriginal support services agencies being aware of new programs and services being offered at other agencies, so proper referrals can be made.

Several respondents indicated the need for streamlining information. One respondent felt that an information package could be made available to Aboriginal newcomers to the city.

If you are looking for a house or employment, it could all be listed in a pamphlet so everyone knows what everyone is doing. This could be a survival guide that that every agency can use. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Another issue with regards to streamlining is the geographic distance between organizations can sometimes act as a barrier for Aboriginal community members requiring different services. Several respondents made reference to a 'universal intake form' some kind of methodology whereby community members could be adequately directed to services and programs:

You have to look at their situation and see what resources there are available. There needs to be some kind of assessment of the clients and their needs.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

For many people who work in Aboriginal agencies, they rely heavily on referring and directing community members to the programs and services they need, and a more streamlined and efficient information processing system would fill some of the gaps for many clients.

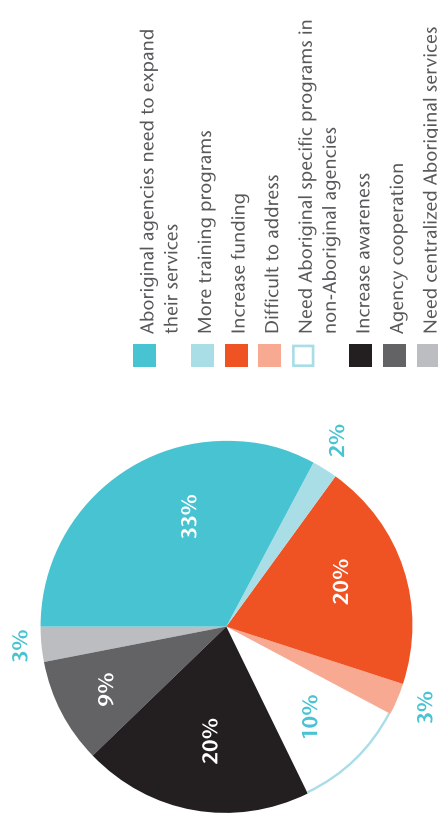
9.1.4.4 Aboriginal Focused Services

Aboriginal specific support services have become integral to the success of many Aboriginal community members in Toronto. While Aboriginal community members can utilize mainstream services as well, there are unique aspects to Aboriginal support services that were recognized from the respondents. As one respondent indicated:

Successful social service programs understand the needs of Aboriginal people and they enhance our abilities. The good programs are community-driven and are culturally-based. They give us pride in who we are and help build our community from our children right up to our seniors. (Poverty Focus Group)

In terms of addressing poverty, it is difficult to isolate programs and services that solely address issues of poverty because of the interconnected nature of poverty. What the research did show was that there was an appreciation of the uniqueness of the services they were provided with at Aboriginal organizations. In terms of gaps in poverty services, the qualitative data indicated that respondents still felt poverty exists, so the gaps in services must also exist. The range of responses from the interviews show that respondents felt that Aboriginal housing services were inadequate (13%), that there was a need to increase or expand programs (24%) and there was a need for addictions treatment (7%). The interviews also indicated how respondents felt these gaps could be closed. From Chart 9H, we can see that thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents indicated that Aboriginal agencies need to expand their services, 20% felt that funding needed to be increased. Both of these indicate an increase in resources for organizations to address the increasing needs of clients.

Chart 9H: Addressing the Poverty Service Gaps in Services for Urban Aboriginal People (Qualitative n=91)

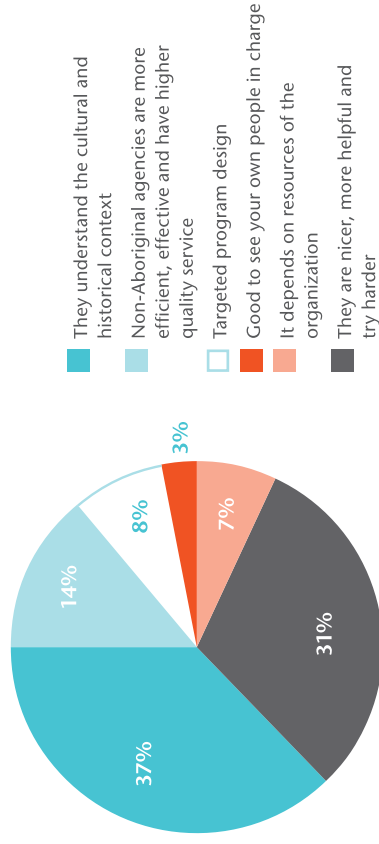


Aboriginal organizations provide a specific set of services that housed in a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal experience, particularly within an urban context. They use traditional cultural ground clients as they struggle with many issues such as addiction and mental health. One respondent described how Aboriginal organizations provide important services that are unique for Aboriginal people in transitioning them to urban life:

The necessary transition is being a part of the community, having social events, doing crafts and community kitchens. It helps to build self-esteem. It's things that don't cost a lot of money, but they help build community. We have to be more informed about what each one of us offers. (Homelessness Focus Group)

When respondents were asked about some of the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social service agencies, they indicated that there was more of an understanding of the cultural and historical context (37%) and that they are nicer, more helpful and try harder (31%). Chart 9I provides a breakdown of these responses.

Chart 9I: Difference Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Social Services Organizations? (Qualitative n=118)



These findings are similar to those of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study by Environics. In this study, they found that 52% indicated that they use Aboriginal services and organizations because of the positive environment, personal relationships, supportive community or connection to Aboriginal culture.¹⁰⁰

Respondents also indicated some of the differences are related to the resources of the organization (7%) and that non-Aboriginal agencies are more efficient, effective and have a higher quality of service (14%). The availability of resources and the effectiveness and quality of service may be related. Regardless, a large portion of respondents felt that it was important to have Aboriginal support services to meet the needs of the Aboriginal population despite there being gaps in those services.

9.1.4.5 International Indigenous People

Toronto has been the centre of international immigrants and newcomers for all of its history as a Canadian city. Toronto's Aboriginal population is also home to many International Indigenous people. The TARP research explored some of the issues surrounding the provision of services to Indigenous people from other parts of the world.

100 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Ottawa: Environics.

There was a great deal of uncertainty towards the presence of international Indigenous people in Toronto. Only 25% of respondents were aware of international Indigenous people accessing aboriginal social services in Toronto and 70% were unsure. One respondent who identifies himself as an International Indigenous person:

I am an American Indigenous person. My family is from Mexico (but) I have always felt most comfortable amongst my Ojibway-Mohawk-Cree counterparts do not access Canadian Aboriginal services. (Community Survey Response)

In Restoule's (2008) work on Indigenous male identity in Toronto, of his research participants was an international Indigenous person. Restoule discusses this individual's situational identity in Toronto:

Romeo, from El Salvador, migrated to the city of San Salvador with his family a young age, leaving the Indigenous community that was his birthplace where everyone was mestizo. He then moved to Canada to live with extended family at the age of 11. He continues to identify as Indigenous even as his brothers and sisters hid their cultural identities. This choice had led to estrangement from his family. Romeo had chosen to pursue Anishnawbe culture while in Toronto because he wished to support his Indigenous identity and believed that he should go with the culture of the people who were there.¹⁰¹

The responses show contrasting ideas around safeguarding Aboriginal services from others who are perceived as not authentically Aboriginal while other responses indicate an openness to sharing resources with other Indigenous people. Some respondents indicated a fear of taking resources and programs away from the Aboriginal community:

Wednesday night at the Native Centre, the South American people are taking (Community Survey Response)

I hope not. We need these vital services for our people that are new to Toronto from the reserves. (Community Survey Response)

Other respondents however felt that the Aboriginal programs should be open to all Indigenous people:

101 Restoule, J.P. (2008). The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation Amongst the Urban Raised Generation. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(2), 15-34.
102 For more information on the concept of authentic identity as expressed by the TARP respondents, refer to the culture and identity chapter.

Why not if we are following the seven grandfather-grandmother four direction teachings? (Community Survey Response)

We have Indigenous people from Latin America and South America because safer to be gay in Canada; Zapotec Indians/Oxaca – some cultures have different traditions around gay people. (Community Survey Response)

There are many nations of Indigenous peoples in Toronto...who isn't international Indigenous? (Community Survey Response)

Respondents were also asked whether Aboriginal agencies were responding to the social service needs of Indigenous people in Toronto. Again, there were a large proportion of respondents who were unaware of the situation of international Indigenous people in accessing Aboriginal social services. Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents felt that the Aboriginal social service agencies were responsive to the needs of international Indigenous people and 78% were unsure. Some respondents indicated that they were mandated by their program funding to only serve Canadian Aboriginal people:

We are mandated for who we serve. (Community Survey Response)

We are restricted by program mandates. (Community Survey Response)

We can assist once but often our program mandates do not provide funding. (Community Survey Response)

Some of the qualitative responses indicate that some Aboriginal agencies such as Council Fire and the Native Canadian Centre have more of an open door policy when it concerns international Indigenous people:

Council Fire does. Other agencies are not as accommodating with non-Aboriginal status. Status issue is complex and doesn't make much sense. International kinship with other Indigenous peoples' status means nothing. (Community Survey Response)

They are responding when engaged; there is a need to access other funding sources. (Community Survey Response)

A number of respondents referred to the issue of various types of Indigenous people accessing Aboriginal social services such as non-Status First Nations people. This discussion is related to the question of who can claim to be Aboriginal in an urban environment and whether such distinctions are relevant. The issue of ethnic mobility,

as discussed in the culture and identity chapter, is also relevant here. Whether an organization is able to provide service and support to international Indigenous people is also dependent on the type of services they provide and the mandate of their funder.

There is no doubt that Indigenous people from all over the world have a shared history of colonization and marginalization. There are significant opportunities for Indigenous people to share the strategies used in New Zealand that have made tremendous strides in recovering their language. This government supported effort has resulted in significant cultural revitalization.¹⁰³ Aboriginal organizations in Toronto as well as Canada have opportunities for cross-border collaboration that can enhance the service delivery of Aboriginal community members and seek to address the issues of poverty and marginalization facing many community members.

Growing up in poverty and remaining in the cycle of poverty and demoralizing position to be in. Many Aboriginal community members in Toronto exist within that cycle of poverty as one of many inter-related issues surround them such as lack of employment, addictions, mental health and housing challenges. Poverty cannot be viewed in isolation and must be considered as a part of the broader social determinant of well-being.

The theme of poverty emerged out of this research and stretched across many other areas. This chapter looked specifically at issues relating to family income, employment, transition and gaps in poverty support services. As Aboriginal agencies continue to support their community members, it is apparent throughout this research that there are gaps in resources for these agencies to fully meet the demand of their client base. Subsequently they must be creative and strategic in their partnerships and collaborations to ensure that the gaps in services are filled. Some of these collaborations require reaching out to non-Aboriginal organizations in addition to Aboriginal inter-agency collaboration

103 Smith, LT. (1998). The Educational and Cultural Implications of Maori Language Revitalization. *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 22, 1, 27-28.

9.2 Background: Aboriginal Social Service Agencies in Toronto

Aboriginal organizations in Toronto emerged in the 1950s and 1960s at which time there was an estimated 200 to 300 people identified as Aboriginal in the city.¹⁰⁴ This began with the formation of the Toronto Indian Club, a volunteer group that planned primarily social activities for Native people. This social club was then transformed into a physical centre by 1962 which had an expanded purpose to provide social services.¹⁰⁵ Within that decade, another organization was established: Anduhyuan which was primarily established to provide shelter for Aboriginal women in crisis. The 1970s brought a wave of Aboriginal organizations in the city, which formed out of the Native Canadian Centre. In 1973, Wigwamen Housing Corporation was established to provide affordable family housing, and Ahbenoojyuugh Inc was developed as an after school and weekend program for Aboriginal children which was discontinued after several years due to lack of funding. In 1976, Pedahbun Lodge was established as a 16-bed substance abuse treatment centre.¹⁰⁶ Council Fire Native Cultural Centre was established in 1978 as a place to provide services for homeless or transient Aboriginal people. First Nations School, which was then known as Wandering Spirit Survival School in 1978 was established as an alternative school, which now falls under the Toronto District School Board.

The 1980s saw the establishment of 13 Aboriginal agencies in Toronto. They are:

- Native Community Crisis Team out of the East Toronto General Hospital (1982)
- Native Earth Performing Arts under Tomson Highway (1982)
- Native Women's Resource Centre (1984)
- Native Men's Residence (1984)
- Ahkinomagai Kemik Education Council as an advisory council to the Toronto District School Board (1985)
- Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes Aboriginal family complex in Scarborough (1986)
- Aboriginal Health Professions Program at the University of Toronto (1988)
- Nishnawbe Homes Inc. (1987)
- Aboriginal Post Secondary Counselling Unit in Toronto established by the Mississauga of New Credit (1987)
- Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (1988)
- 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations (1989)
- Anishnawbe Health (1989)
- Native Skills Centre (1989)

In the 1990s, more Aboriginal organizations were established. Greater Toronto Aboriginal Management Board was established in 1990. Out of the Native Canadian Centre, Aboriginal Legal Service Toronto was established as a new organization with a new Aboriginal legal aid clinic through the Ontario Legal Aid Plan in 1991. Metropolitan Toronto Police established the Aboriginal Peacekeeper Unit in 1991. Gizhaadaawgamik Childcare Centre began in 1992.

9.2.1 Anduhyuan Women's Shelter

The Anduhyuan Women's Shelter is one of Canada's oldest shelters and provides specific programs and services to Aboriginal women with or without children who are leaving an abusive situation. With

104 Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1993). *The Emergence of Aboriginal Institutions in Metropolitan Toronto*. Brantford: Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

105 Bobiwash-Howard, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

106 Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1993). *The Emergence of Aboriginal Institutions in Metropolitan Toronto*. Brantford: Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

107 Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1993). *The Emergence of Aboriginal Institutions in Metropolitan Toronto*. Brantford: Obonsawin-Irwin Consulting Inc. for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Anduhyuan, Nekenaan Second Stage Housing is a program which provides temporary housing to Aboriginal women as they move from an abusive domestic situation into their new life. This is a recently renovated six-storey building with 24 furnished units, some of which are single occupancy and some are shared. These units are also for women and her children.

9.2.2 Council Fire Native Cultural Centre

Council Fire has operated since 1978 and delivers services within five main sectors which include the health sector, counselling unit, gathering place, child and family sector, youth sector and the education sector. Council Fire is organized based on a traditional lodge approach and functions organizationally in a culturally bound way. Council Fire is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC), however they are not a friendship centre. Council Fire partners with many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to provide a range of support services to support and facilitate the success of community members.

9.2.3 Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes

Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes (Metro Toronto) Inc. is a centralized, 87-unit Aboriginal apartment and townhouse complex that opened in 1986. This complex has three and four bedroom units which are located in the east part of Toronto. This project is funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Gabriel Dumont is a subsidized housing project which provides housing for Aboriginal people on a geared to income basis.

9.2.4 Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

The NCCT was one of the first Aboriginal organizations in Toronto and many of the GTA's current Aboriginal organizations evolved from a NCCT program. The focus of NCCT remains on promoting Aboriginal culture, and there has been a movement away from social

service provision. The NCCT serves 180 clients a day, some of them through the daily lunch program and some through the cultural programming. The NCCT has a historical footprint on the City of Toronto and remains one of the most important cultural gathering spaces for Aboriginal people.

9.2.5 Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) was founded in 1986 by people who were concerned with the high number of Aboriginal children in the care of the Children's Aid Societies and the associated issues such as poverty, addictions, family violence and homelessness. They are mandated under the Child and Family Services Act to protect children from all forms of maltreatment and to provide residential care for children who require it. NCFST provides a broad range of services to support the healthy development of children and their families through proactive programming and supports.

9.2.6 Native Men's Residence

The Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res) opened its doors in 1988 as an emergency shelter for men without a place to live. As the need for the Aboriginal homeless population emerged, Na-Me-Res responded with programs designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal homeless men within a culturally responsive strengths-based management approach. The Men's Residence provides clients with temporary shelter, as well as assistance and support to secure appropriate shelter for their needs. They currently have a 63-bed residence. Na-Me-Res also provides outreach to those who live on the streets and in seasonal shelters by providing them with support as they transition from the street to homes. This support includes a minimum follow up of one year. Na-Me-Res also provides traditional services through culture-based workshops and activities for the clients as well as group and individual healing sessions through Visiting Elders. They also have a program called Sagatay which is a three to six month interactive learning program

in communication, information management, personal management, teamwork, Aboriginal studies, and healthy living and employability skills. Specialized response programs are provided for those clients who are dealing with mental health and addiction issues.

9.2.7 Native Women's Resource Centre

The Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto provides ongoing support for women through a variety of client-based programs. These include academic upgrading, assistance with housing, shower, laundry and clothing bank, advocacy and wellness through accessing resources and support for appointments and counselling, employment supports, parenting programs and support for healthy families, youth programs and healthy baby, healthy children.

9.2.8 Nishnawbe Homes Inc.

Nishnawbe Homes Inc. was founded in 1984 and were allocated 49 units from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the Urban Native Housing Program across 10 properties in Toronto. In 2007, Nishnawbe Homes purchased and renovated a 62-unit building called Zhaawnong Gamik, or the Church Street South House. This building houses the main administration. Nishnawbe Homes Inc. has accumulated several properties and managed to house more than 1,500 people over the years. In 2011, a new building is being established at the corner of Dundas and Parliament Street in partnership with Miziwe Biik Development Corporation. This new residence will meet the demands for their non-traditional tenants, that is, those who

9.2.9 Miziwe Biik Employment and Training

Miziwe Biik Employment and Training provides services and programs to support the employment and training for Aboriginal community members in Toronto. This involves extensive partnerships collaborations with other agencies, governments, educational institutions and employers. Miziwe Biik Employment and Training part of Miziwe Biik Development Corporation which is comprised of three main areas which include the Aboriginal Business Resource Centre, Aboriginal Housing Program and the Thunderbird Arts Entrepreneurial Centre.

9.2.10 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations is the only organization that provides services and programming to Aboriginal LGBT people in Toronto. They are a leader in providing advocacy and services to address HIV/AIDS amongst two-spirited people and those affected by HIV/AIDS. 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations works collaboratively with many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations such as food banks, churches and shelters to address the unique issues facing their clients.

9.2.11 Wigwamen Inc.

Wigwamen Incorporated has been operating as one of Ontario's largest urban Native housing providers. They have 210 units throughout the City of Toronto, as well as a 92-unit apartment building for families and singles in Scarborough. Additionally they have a 103-unit apartment complex for seniors in downtown Toronto. As well as providing housing and programs in Toronto, they have housing programs throughout Ontario.



THE ABORIGINAL MIDDLE CLASS IN TORONTO

I think that it's pretty challenging for an Aboriginal person to live in this Eurocentric world...When I think of middle class I am not sure what that is... Because I think we are at that point... and we are middle class.

(Middle Class Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- There is a large and growing population of economically successful, or middle class, in Toronto as defined as making \$40,000 or more per year.
- The Aboriginal middle class is characterized by a stable social and economic existence including secure housing, high levels of education and stable family.
- The Aboriginal middle class live in neighbourhoods scattered throughout the GTA so there is no 'Aboriginal neighbourhood'.
- There is a low level of 'institutional completeness' among Aboriginal people in Toronto in terms of social, cultural and recreational organizations that meet the needs of middle class Aboriginal people.
- There are roughly equal number of middle class individuals who are involved and who are not involved with the Aboriginal community in Toronto, but lack of involvement can be perceived as a problem in terms of long-term viability of an Aboriginal community in Toronto.
- There is a significant amount of 'lateral violence' against the Aboriginal middle class by other members of the Aboriginal community.
- While the majority of middle class wish to maintain their Aboriginal culture and identity, there is a danger that they will be lost to the Aboriginal community if new organizations are not established to meet their needs.

10.1 Introduction

There is very little research on social class among urban Aboriginal people. This is partly because the phenomenon is relatively new; result of recent trends of increasing economic success of Aboriginal people living in cities. At the same time, there has been a degree of reluctance by some to recognize the emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class. There are some who regard the concept as 'Western' not applying to Aboriginal people who suggest that the common story, cultures and experiences make class distinctions meaningless. In addition, some argue that making class distinctions is divisive serves to undermine the solidarity of Aboriginal people.

But, as Wotherspoon (2003) points out, class does matter for Aboriginal people. It has important implications in many aspects of life including degree of inequality and life chances among groups and within groups as well as influencing how people view themselves in relation to others and within their own group. "Class factors enter broader social problems like social cohesion, integration, inclusion/exclusion, political commitment, ideological dispositions and political behaviour".¹⁰⁸ And, as this chapter illustrates, the emergence of urban Aboriginal middle class has significant implications for many aspects of peoples' lives in Toronto.

The concept of middle class is notoriously difficult to measure. It is usually refers to such complex factors as income, occupation, level of education, geographical place of residence, political preferences, social interactions, cultural traits, values and attitudes. For purposes of report, middle class will be defined in economic terms pertaining to those who earn \$40,000 or more annually. This notion of middle class allows for an empirical measurement of the concept thus avoiding some of the 'softer' dimensions of the concept. It also does not necessarily imply any correspondences or similarities with members of mainstream middle class.

108 Wotherspoon, T. (2003). Prospect for a New Middle Class Among Urban Aboriginal People. D. Newhouse & E. Peters (Eds.) *Not Strangers in These Parts: Aboriginal People in Cities*. Ottawa: Policy Research Institute, p. 149.

10.2 The Aboriginal Middle Class in Toronto

The TARP research demonstrates that the Aboriginal middle class in Toronto is a multifaceted phenomenon with significant implications for the individual and the community. Becoming economically successful implies being able to avoid the serious social problems that characterize the situation of a large number of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Economic success and upward mobility often affords the ability to make life choices and take advantage of opportunities unavailable to many Aboriginal people living in the city. It may also involve a re-definition of an individual's identity as an Aboriginal person and a change in the nature of social relations within the larger urban Aboriginal community. Individuals may shift their lifestyle choices, consumption patterns and other class-related cultural factors.¹⁰⁹ This may mean becoming involved with institutions and taking on some of the behaviours of mainstream society. On the other hand, it may also lead to the creation of a new Aboriginal identity and a re-definition of Aboriginal culture within the context of the urban centre. And there can be no doubt that, for the majority of successful Aboriginal people in Toronto, their Aboriginal culture and identity is an important factor in their lives.

There can be no doubt that a significant number of Aboriginal people fall into the definition of middle class in Toronto. As reported in Chapter 3, 37.1% of the TARP respondents had a total family income of \$40,000 or more, with 17.3% earning \$60,000 or more and 9.3% \$80,000 and above. This result is similar to the Environics study that reported that 24% of Toronto respondents (weighted sample) earned \$60,000 or more.¹¹⁰ The percentage of economically successful Aboriginal people in Toronto appears to be similar to that in Barrie/Midland/Ontario but higher than those in other cities in Ontario. The Urban Aboriginal Task Force research discovered that among the five cities studied an average of 25.4% of the respondents earned \$40,000 or more.¹¹¹

The backgrounds of the Aboriginal middle class in Toronto are diverse. Some economically successful Aboriginal people were born and raised in Toronto in middle class homes but the majority were from rural areas, often in First Nations, in modest economic circumstances. Some went to residential schools or had to overcome difficulties in their early life such as being taken away by Children's Aid, others were raised in stable loving families. Some were raised with the traditional culture, others not. Some examples from the life histories illustrate the diversity of backgrounds:

I was born in Toronto. We were raised in the city because my parents met in the army during the Second World War...In my mother's wisdom, she was trying to make life better for us. She didn't teach us the language. It was better if we got along with everyone, if we blended in...she wanted us to have it better than she did...and she wanted us to be more socialized in a metropolitan area...To make sure that we went to school, to make sure that we had more than one pair of shoes, we had Christmas presents. (Life History)

When I think of my childhood, I realize how our lives were shaped by our young years...My father built the house we lived in (on a First Nations community)...I of my parents attended residential school...and said that they did not have any trouble in either of those residential schools. They both retained their language and all of us children were fluent as well...Both of my parents had a passion for knowledge and passed that on in all of us children. They helped foster not only a passion for learning but also drew us closer together as a family...They showed how to learn life's lessons in everything we did, and that included play as well later when working. (Life History)

It's something to say when you have some role models in your life and thank god that my parents are still together. There were some bad times, with alcohol running through the reserve, and it was often hard for people to admit. You don't realize all the skills you take away from your parents...My father was a good provider, but the majority of the work in our community is seasonal and you can raise a family on that so he would leave the reserve for periods of time...he would send cheques home, but the cheques were never enough. In order to raise the children, my mother started to hunt. (Life History)

I grew up with my parents, but spent most of my time with my grandmother. I also spent a lot of time with my extended family, my uncles and aunts. I learned at an early age about survival. I learned by the time I was six I could skin a moose for example...There were other things that went on in the community such as teachings. They were traditional teachings, nothing to do with education we had now....We would learn our language, and how to write it....Then I was transferred

109 *Ibid*, p 152.

110 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Toronto Report*. Ottawa: Environics, p 15.

111 Of the five cities studied, Barrie/Midland/Ontario (38%), Ottawa (32%) and Sudbury (29%) had the highest number of respondents making \$40,000 or more with Kenora (16%), Thunder Bay (13%) having the fewest.

to another residential school...That is where the physical abuse started...There were other benefits from the things we did in the residential school. One, of course, is that we got an education, and we learned discipline in a hard way. There were bad things we learned also, we learned to lie, we learned to cheat, and we became abusive because we were abused. We lost contact with our parents and that created disrespect for them because they were not in our lives...Like I said, those residential school years helped me with my education and I went on to college and university later. Education helped me to control myself by my learning about healing and by talking to the Elders, That is where the real healing started, the Elders. I still had that strong traditional memory, even though it was almost destroyed in residential schools. (Life History)

A number of characteristics of the Aboriginal middle class in Toronto point to a stable existence. Regarding housing, only 31% of the total TARP sample live in a single detached, semi-detached, townhouse or condo but, of those who did, 73.8% earn \$40,000 or more. Similarly, of those who own their own home, 77.7% earn \$40,000 or more. Only 21% of those earning \$40,000 or more stated their housing situation was not stable.

We moved to Scarborough and then lived there for 20 years...Home ownership is not a priority for Native people, but it was for me because we always had a house...You had a house and neighbours and you had roots. (Life History)

As would be expected, members of the Aboriginal middle class have substantially higher level of education than those earning less than \$40,000. Twenty-two and a half percent (22.5%) of the total TARP sample has obtained a university degree compared to 60.6% of those earning \$40,000 or more.

They have formal education. That is the most common factor. (Key Informant Interview)

Well, I guess the first thing is my education. It's kind of funny, you know, because I always assumed that I would go to university. And once I learned what a master's degree was, I thought "I want one of those too"...Because I assumed it would happen and I made it happen...It took a long time and it was something I did on my own. (Life History)

As would be expected the employment situation of the middle class is secure. Only .07% of those earning \$40,000 were unemployed with the large majority being employed full-time. Further, a significant proportionate of the overall TARP sample (27%) were employed in

professional or managerial positions. It is interesting to note that employment base of economically successfully Aboriginal people in Toronto is broader than other cities in Ontario. That is, middle class Aboriginal people in Toronto are employed in more diverse occupations, including outside social services, compared to those studied in the Urban Aboriginal Task Force.¹¹²

There is a tendency for members of the Aboriginal middle class to be married or living common law (56.9% of those earning \$40,000 or more compared to 27.1% who are single). Of those who answered the question (n=329), the majority were married to an Aboriginal person (60.3%) but there was also a fairly high percentage of those who were married or living common law and who earned \$40,000 or more were married to a non-Aboriginal person (41.3%). A substantial number of inter-marriage could have significant implications for the maintenance of an Aboriginal identity in the city.

Like the general TARP sample, about half (45.5%) of those individuals earning \$40,000 or more were born in Toronto. Interestingly, fewer middle class individuals maintain links with their community of origin than those earning less than \$40,000. Only 38.3% of those earning \$40,000 or more maintain contacts with their community of origin. For the TARP sample as a whole, of those who answered the question, 69.5% maintained links (n= 561).¹¹³ This is similar to the findings of the Environics study which found that 63% feel 'very close' or 'fairly close' to their community of origin.¹¹⁴

In terms of location of residence, the Aboriginal middle class tend to be geographically scattered throughout the Toronto/GTA as demonstrated in Chapter 3, Map 1A and 1B. Thus, there is little residential concentration or 'Aboriginal neighbourhoods' in Toronto.

They live outside the downtown, live in good neighbourhoods, own homes, work in business or as professionals in government, financial institutions, educators and Aboriginal organizations. (Key Informant Interview)

112 Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Ontario Métis Association and Ontario Native Women's Association. (2007). *Ontario Aboriginal Task Force: Final Report*.

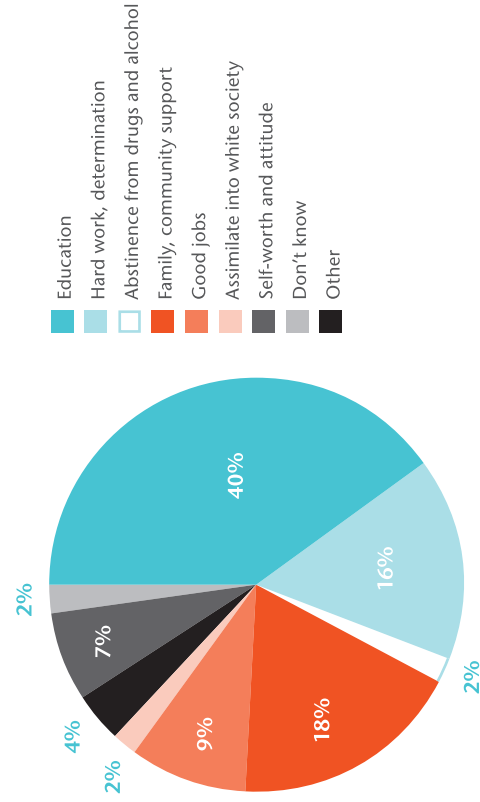
113 239 respondents or 28.8% did not answer the question.

114 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Toronto Report*. Ottawa: Environics,

I think that being in the suburbs, it doesn't define me, but it is part of me...I wanted to live in a better neighbourhood, so I guess in some ways that is a little bit classist. I grew up with both of my parents working, so I had a certain standard of living. (Life History)

Respondents were asked what were the reasons for the economic success of Aboriginal people in Toronto. The most common reasons given were high levels of education, family and community support and hard work and determination as illustrated in Chart 10A. Respondents were also asked about the barriers that exist that make it difficult for Aboriginal people to attain economic success. The most important factors mentioned include lack of education (28%), lack of motivation (14%), addictions (11%), poverty (11%), social isolation (11%) and discrimination (10%). Finally, respondents were asked about the major issues concerning economically successful Aboriginal people in Toronto. A number of issues were mentioned including having high living expenses (18%), that they do not participate in the Aboriginal community (12%), being busy with their own lives (10%), assimilation and identity issues (7%) and better jobs and stable resources (7%).

Chart 10A: Reasons for Economic Success (Qualitative n=352)



Similar sentiments were frequently expressed in the key informant interviews and life histories:

Attitudes – they have attitude that permits success instead of a defeatist attitude. They believe that it is possible to be successful. Others' attitude is that no matter what happens, I will not be successful. There is a lot of low self-esteem among Aboriginal people. (Key Informant Interview)

The middle class are hard working and self-disciplined. (Key Informant Interview)

They have confidence, no drugs and alcohol abuse, not caught up in negative attitudes. (Key Informant Interview)

I was taught to persevere. I was taught to work hard, that nothing is easy. We didn't have money. We had to pay our own way... So the girls from the time that we were little, worked hard and they were rewarded. (Life History)

It would appear from the findings that Aboriginal people who achieve economic success in the city are characterized in a similar fashion as members of the mainstream middle class. With higher education levels, hard work, stable families and supports and secure housing, Aboriginal people can enjoy the benefits of a stable lifestyle.

Whatever I have now is what I've worked for. I bought my condo, I have some and I am debt-free. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't have a TV, but I live with my family. I am happy. (Life History)

10.3 Institutions, Community and the Aboriginal Middle Class

The preceding analysis of the TARP findings suggests that, in many ways, the Aboriginal urban middle class is similar to middle class people in non-Aboriginal urban society. To a degree, this is true. A deeper examination of the data also points to some important differences which could have significant implications for the creation of a viable urban Aboriginal community.

Two key characteristics of the non-Aboriginal middle class are the ability to organize and express its interests and empower individuals through organizations and its capacity to utilize these organizations to maintain solidarity within a viable community. This is particularly

true for ethnic groups in Toronto.¹¹⁵ Frequently the sense of community is reinforced by a geographical neighbourhood such as Chinatown, Little Portugal or Greek town. But just as important are the social organizations that serve to maintain an individual's identity as a member of the group and community. Thus, a group will establish a diversity of 'ethnic' organizations including businesses, recreational centres, cultural events, sports leagues, ethnic media such as newspapers, TV and radio in the group's language, religious institutions, professional associations, cultural centres, restaurants and bars, political associations, film festivals, parades, etc. Almost all of these organizations are supported by members of the community themselves with little government funding. When a group has developed an array of organizations, it is said to be 'institutionally complete'. That is, an individual can live a significant portion of their lives within the group's community, speaking their language (even within institutions of the larger society such as banks), interacting with people within their own group and engaging in cultural practices.

The history of urban Aboriginal organizational development in Toronto is very different. Because of the pressing need to address social problems facing Aboriginal people in the city, after a number of 'social organizations' were formed, the vast majority of Aboriginal organizations that grew up were social service-focused. In the early days of Aboriginal urbanization, in the 50s and 60s, some non-service organizations were formed such as the Indian Friendship Club (later called the Toronto Indian Club), the Canadian Indian Centre (later called the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto), Ladies Auxiliary, the Toronto Native Times newspaper and the Indian-Eskimo Association (later the Canadian Association in Support of Native People). These early organizations functioned to try to create places where Aboriginals could gather to reinforce their cultural identity and form a community in the city.

During the first half of this century, many Aboriginal people may have lost their 'status' and may have even appeared to be 'invisible', but they did not cease to exist as Aboriginal people. The members of the Indian Club at the 'Y' saw the need in the 1950s for the growing Native community to have its own meeting

115 The reference to ethnic groups in Toronto is in no way suggesting that Aboriginal people are an ethnic group. Aboriginal people, as the first peoples of Canada, represent a people with a special legal status and place in Canadian society.

*place. They saw it as a place that would help develop a sense of pride among Native community and would reflect a Native presence in Toronto.*¹¹⁶

Back then, the Native Centre was more about card games, going to the show, outings. It was a place to gather to talk about other people that were from home. It was a social club. It was for Native people to get together and see a friendly brown face and find out about the news up north. (Life History)

Howard-Bobiwash has pointed out the important leadership Aboriginal women played in these early organizations. These women "...utilized their class mobility to support the structural development of Native community organization and promote positive pride of Native cultural identity in the city".¹¹⁷

As the Aboriginal population in Toronto grew and the social problems became more acute, an organizational shift took place in which a variety of social service agencies grew up to meet the needs. In addition, there was a corresponding decline in more social and cultural organizations. Indeed, at the present time, approximately 80% of Aboriginal organizations in Toronto are related to providing a variety of social services in the areas of child welfare, counselling, addiction treatment, homelessness and shelter housing, health, social housing, education, HIV/AIDS, justice, employment and training, young women, men and seniors. Almost all are supported by funding from the various levels of government. Many of the social service agencies began at the Native Canadian Centre.

It was the main centre. Aboriginal Legal Services started there, Native Child and Family Services started there, Na-Me-Res started there, Nishnawbe Homes had an office there. So it was an incubator for the Toronto social service network that grew out there right now. (Life History)

While there are some Aboriginal organizations whose mandate is social services, particularly in the arts and media (the Association for Development in the Performing Arts, Native Earth Performing Arts, Aboriginal Voices Radio), education (the University of Toronto

116 Obonsawin, R., & Howard-Bobiwash, H. (1997). The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto: The Meeting Place for the Aboriginal Community for 35 Years. In F. Sanderson & H. Howard-Bobiwash (Eds.). *The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto*. Toronto: Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, p 29.

117 Howard-Bobiwash, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

Aboriginal Student's Association), health (the Aboriginal Midwifery Association), business (the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business) and law (the Aboriginal Law Association) respondents reported that there is a serious shortage of organizations that are designed to meet the social and cultural needs of economically successful Aboriginal people in Toronto. This fact is illustrated by 61% of the TARP respondents stating that there are gaps in services to economically successful Aboriginal people.

Community is based around Aboriginal social service agencies. Aboriginal people in Toronto who don't need these services tend to isolate themselves because there is nowhere for them to get together. (Key Informant Interview)

Some economically successful respondents suggested that some of the Aboriginal organizations, such as First Nations School, the Native Canadian Centre and summer camps that might be attractive to them are such that they don't feel comfortable with them because they are still oriented toward individuals with social problems.

Because the other kids are a bit wild. The other kids who go are clients. They have behavioural things happening in their lives, so you wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable camping. I don't know if I feel comfortable. (Middle class Focus Group)

And their daughter swears...and I thought "there is no way I will let my daughter hang around her because I don't want my daughter to swear". It's not that I am trying to say "I am better than you", but I think it is just a parenting skill...It is her responsibility to raise her child. I understand the difference, I don't know if it's because its lower income or lack of parenting skills, but the middle class people are just trying to do things right. (Middle Class Focus Group)

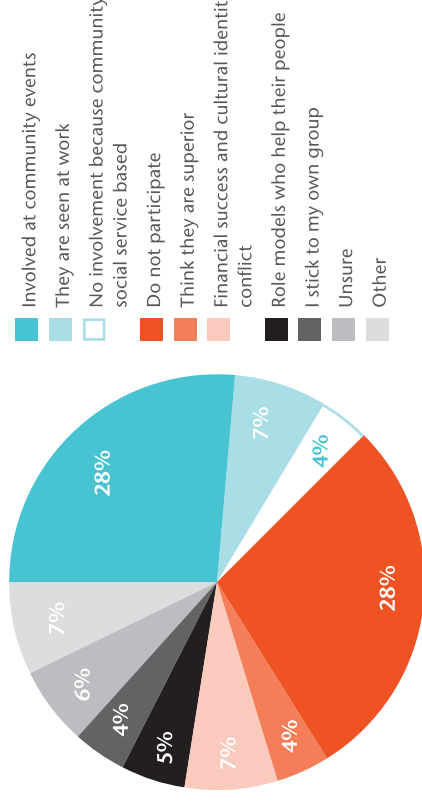
I was at one time with Aboriginal social housing, and you know I hated it. I hated seeing the other families living in poverty. I hate the garbage, I hated the smoking, the partying. I hated the kids being neglected... And sometimes I wonder "I've become a snob". It's just not good enough for me. My family deserves more and I don't want to settle for a life like that. (Middle Class Focus Group)

The Aboriginal community is built around social services, not cultural services. (Key Informant Interview)

Other respondents reported that the middle class were reluctant to contribute to the Aboriginal community. Some stated that despite the diversity of Aboriginal people in Toronto, there is also a perceived

hierarchy and stratification in which educated and professional Aboriginal community members do not associate with Aboriginal community members who are not experiencing such success. This creates a gap in the population. Chart 10B illustrates the perceptions of the TARP respondents regarding the involvement of economically successful Aboriginal people in the Toronto Aboriginal community.

Chart 10B: Engagement of Economically Successful People with the Toronto Aboriginal Community (Quantitative n=1115)



Equal numbers of TARP respondents say that economically successful Aboriginal people are involved and not involved for various reasons. Within the focus groups there was a frequent sentiment expressed that it was difficult to get the Aboriginal middle class involved in the community or that they separate themselves from the community.

One of the things that seemed to be divisive is income, finances and poverty. At the NCC, we discovered that people wanted to include and attract the middle class but they were often reluctant to participate. We were unable to tap into Aboriginal professional societies. (Governance Focus Group)

A group of women formed PAWS, Professional Aboriginal Women's Society...but couldn't consistently attract people ... we couldn't get that cohesiveness going. There are so many dividing lines between our people. (Governance Focus Group)

There is a lot of politics. There were a few forums...it was the money...there was too much politics...it was hard to get everyone to come to the same mind when there was money involved. (Middle Class Focus Group)

People that attain financial success unfortunately isolate themselves from the less successful. (Key Informant Interview)

They are removed from those we see on a daily basis. They don't come downtown, go right home after work. (Key Informant Interview)

We tend to live in areas not accessible to the majority of First Nations people. (Key Informant Interview)

They live across the city and stay within their own social networks. (Key Informant Interview)

They live in good accommodation (comfortable middle class housing); spread across the city (so they are hidden); leisure time activities the same as non-Aboriginal people (but they may go to Aboriginal cultural events such as arts once in a while). (Key Informant Interview)

Attitudes of wanting to succeed. 'cultural malleability' meaning they can adapt and fit into city life. Some people move to the suburbs and 'fit in' because there are no Aboriginal people there. They don't become involved in the Aboriginal community. They don't deny being Aboriginal but it's not relevant because they are the only Aboriginal. Some hide their 'Aboriginalness'. (Key Informant Interview)

Probably staying away from the social services issues, and Toronto's Native social services attitude. (Key Informant Interview)

There seems to be a perceived conflict between financial success and cultural identity. (Key Informant Interview)

They stay away because of the bashing or they have an attitude that they are better. (Key Informant Interview)

Come to cultural events, sitting on boards, Christmas helping at agencies; majority of people who have stability give back. (Key Informant Interview)

When the quantitative data is examined, the degree to which members of the Aboriginal middle class are involved in the larger Aboriginal community is open to interpretation. Thirty-five point one percent (35.1%) of the total TARP sample reported that they were members of an Aboriginal organization. The percentage of individuals earning

\$40,000 or more who reported being a member of an Aboriginal organization was actually somewhat higher at 41.7%.¹¹⁸

There can be no doubt, however, that there is a perception (61% of respondents) that there are very few Aboriginal organizations designed to meet the needs of the urban Aboriginal middle class in Toronto which reinforces the finding that the Aboriginal community in Toronto is 'institutionally incomplete'. A similar sentiment was expressed by respondents in the focus groups and key informant interviews.

The boards of directors who represent agencies are only one small segment of Aboriginal population. There is a large middle class who do not sit on boards or are not clients. There is no opportunity for them to build community. (Governance Focus Group)

There is a lack of places for the middle class to go. To bring them out you need to know what will keep them coming. (Governance Focus Group)

There is nothing available for them...there is no place for them to network and gather with others with similar interests. (Key informant interview)

If they need anything, it could be a place for young professionals like a professional association. (Key informant interview)

They need access to cultural services for families in a healthy environment. (Key informant interview)

Conversely, the degree to which economically successful Aboriginal people are not involved in the larger Aboriginal community is open to interpretation. As stated earlier, 41.7% of middle class individuals reported belonging to an Aboriginal organization.¹¹⁹ But only 18% of those who answered (n=110) who earned over \$40,000 indicated that they were involved with the Toronto Aboriginal community. However, it is clear that there is a perceived need (61% of respondents) for organizations and facilities for economically successful Aboriginal people

¹¹⁸ The high percentage of middle class membership in Aboriginal organizations could reflect the fact that a significant portion of the TARP sample was composed of staff of Aboriginal organizations.

¹¹⁹ The large percentage may reflect two characteristics of the TARP sample. First, a large number of economically successful individuals were associated with Aboriginal organizations as board members, staff or members. Second the sample may have under-represented middle class Aboriginal people living in the GTA due to the difficulty in contacting and interviewing them.

It is interesting to note that very few respondents in the total TARP sample belonged to any non-Aboriginal organizations, although of those who did (n=32), 82% were from the sample that earned \$40,000 or more. They stated that they belonged to such associations as a fitness centre, bowling league, professional association, service club, recreational sports league, Canadian Federation of University Women and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

In many ways the lack of organizations designed to meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of the middle class in Toronto is understandable given the immediate need to establish agencies to address the pressing social and economic problems facing Aboriginal people. It also makes sense that middle class Aboriginal people would not avail themselves of social service agencies when they have no need of their services or do not feel comfortable even in 'social/cultural' focused organizations that include services and programs for individuals experiencing problems such as homelessness (as is the case at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, the major social/cultural Aboriginal organization in Toronto, where the proportion of those earning \$40,000 or more, while overall were satisfied with the Centre, had a rate of satisfaction less than those earning less than \$40,000 indicating a lower rate of usage¹²⁰). It is interesting to note that the Urban Aboriginal Task Force research discovered a similar lack of institutional completeness among Aboriginal people in other Ontario cities.¹²¹

On the other hand, there have been economically successful Aboriginal people in Toronto for several decades and it would seem reasonable that during that time, individuals would take the initiative to set up social/cultural organizations, especially since there was a history of such organizations being in existence in an early stage of urbanization in Toronto. A number of factors may account for the lack of institutional completeness of urban Aboriginal people.

An obvious factor is the lack of residential concentration or 'Aboriginal neighbourhoods' in Toronto. The Aboriginal middle class reside in areas of the GTA making it difficult to have a central location for organizations or individuals to conveniently cluster. Another factor is that Aboriginal people in Canada do not have a long history of urbanization and establishing formal organizations as part of their cultural heritage. Coming from predominantly small rural communities with few bureaucratic institutions, there is little tradition to depend upon to establish such organizations. In addition, many Aboriginal organizations are associated with substantial government financial support and there is no strong custom of individual philanthropic practice among Aboriginal people. This is coupled with the fact that until recently, there were not a significant number of Aboriginal people with sufficient disposable income to allow for the establishment and maintenance of organizations.

Furthermore, for some Aboriginal people there is a reluctance to even acknowledge that there is an urban Aboriginal middle class because it implies a social stratification that is inconsistent with Aboriginal culture. Traditionally, most Aboriginal societies were characterized as 'egalitarian', that is no individual or group 'put themselves above others' in an attitude of superiority. Thus, creating distinctive organizations for economically successful people might be perceived as exclusive or 'elitist' and therefore, not acceptable in Aboriginal terms. Finally, there were many respondents that pointed to a characteristic of the urban Aboriginal community that is a major inhibiting factor in forming organizations for the middle class – the presence of serious divisions within the community itself, or, as some termed it, lateral violence as discussed in the following section.

The findings indicate that there are some large gaps between those who are economically successful and those who are not. The dearth of Aboriginal organizations for the urban Aboriginal middle class coupled with their lack of involvement has important implications for the formation of a viable Aboriginal community in Toronto as well as the maintenance of an Aboriginal identity and culture in the city.

120 Recently, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto has made a major effort to attract economically successful Aboriginal people. See: *Native Canadian Centre of Toronto: TARP Case Study Report*.

121 See *Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Final Report*, Chapter 12.

10.4 Culture, Identity, Lateral Violence and the Aboriginal Middle Class

It is essential to note that all individuals in the TARP study identified as Aboriginal people and reported that their Aboriginal culture and identity was important to them. The way in which the individual expresses their culture and identity varies significantly. Some respondents suggested that they returned to their community of origin to participate in ceremonies and events as well as to interact with friends and family. For some, a relationship to the land was critical to Aboriginal culture. For others, participation in the great diversity of cultural events in the city was the primary way they connected to their culture. The research discovered that individuals participated in such activities as powwows, National Aboriginal Week, feasts and socials, ceremonies, traditional teachings, medicine and healing, video and film, visual art, Aboriginal theatre, bingo and sporting events. The large majority of the total TARP sample (73%) stated that they participate in Aboriginal cultural activities. Chapter 13 discusses the topic of culture and identity in the city in detail.

When the data is examined with regard to participation in cultural events and economically successful individuals it is discovered that those making over \$40,000 have a somewhat lower participation rate. For the total sample, only 29.5% of those earning over \$40,000 engaged in cultural activities (compared to 61.9% of those earning under \$40,000) and of those who did participate, only 29.5% earned over \$40,000 (compared to 47.9% who earned less than \$40,000). When asked whether there was a need for additional cultural services and activities the vast majority who replied (n=557) said yes (80%). When the findings are broken down by social class 55.8% of those earning under \$40,000 indicated there was a need for more compared to 33.3% of those earning over \$40,000.

It is interesting to note that the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Toronto Report* found that a significant proportion of Aboriginal people participated in Aboriginal cultural activities. Specifically, 44% participated

‘often’ and 38% ‘occasionally’. Seventy percent (70%) of respondents in that study felt that Aboriginal culture in Toronto was becoming stronger. The most important aspect of Aboriginal culture to pass to the next generation included customs and traditions, ceremonies, spirituality, language, Elders, celebrations and events, music, family values and art. At the same time, the study discovered that there is concern over losing Aboriginal culture in the city with 25% ‘totally agreeing’ and 24% ‘somewhat agreeing’ that they are concerned compared to 36% who ‘totally disagree’ and 13% who ‘disagree somewhat’.¹²² Interestingly, the study also found that Aboriginal people were as likely to have non-Aboriginal friends (49%) as Aboriginal friends (44%), especially among the youth.¹²³

When asked what kinds of Aboriginal cultural and social activities facilities should be established, the most frequent response for the TARP sample was the need for a cultural centre in Toronto. Other suggestions included more access to Elders, more language and culture classes offered, establishing recreational facilities, more opportunities for traditional healing and increased cultural educational programming.

Build a cultural centre that isn't involved in social services. (Key Informant Interview)

Getting reconnected with their roots. A lot don't know about themselves. (Key Informant Interview)

Losing Elders at an alarming rate. (Key Informant Interview).

More access, more money going toward ceremony and cultural activities... When we don't build a huge lodge. (Middle Class Focus Group)

It's more difficult to practice in the city. When we did it at home it was in the city. Here it's like you are just off a main highway. (Middle Class Focus Group)

My family was the only Native family in the neighbourhood. And I always wish there were more Native friends to identify with and it's kind of sad that way: my son doesn't have much traditional culture. He was exposed to the same culture from when he was in the Aboriginal Head Start Program, that he has used now and then, but that's about it. (Middle Class Focus Group)

122 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Toronto Report*. Ottawa: Environics Institute. p 30-32.

123 *Ibid.* p 34.

We have been trying for years to get a cultural centre. This would bring us together in a good way. (Middle Class Focus Group)

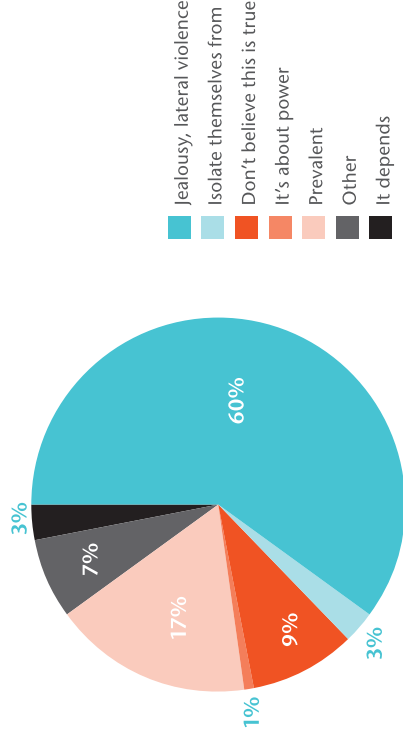
I did a project on the Jewish Community Centre and it was amazing. They are totally non-profit, they are not funded. They invest money and they raised 90 million dollars in one year. They have some amazing facilities for families and stuff. And I thought how come Aboriginal people can't do that? (Middle Class Focus Group)

It's one of my personal goals to build a foundation. I always thought of approaching it as an investment. Building a network...I notice with the Jewish community, they had a lot of investments and partnerships, banks backing them up, more like a business trying to make money and then providing the programs. (Middle Class Focus Group)

Aboriginal culture is important for urban Aboriginal people. For most of the respondents there is a strong desire to practice their culture in the city and maintain a sense of identity. And while there are diverse ways to express Aboriginal culture in Toronto, there are few formal organizations in the form of facilities and opportunities for economically successful people to develop a cohesive sense of community.

As alluded to previously, an important factor inhibiting the involvement of economically successful Aboriginal people in the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto as well as a reason for not establishing Aboriginal organizations to meet their needs are the divisions within the Aboriginal community itself, especially perceived biases against the Aboriginal middle class. Respondents were asked "Do you agree or disagree with the statement, 'If some Aboriginal people attain financial success, there will be others who will put them down'"? Chart 10C illustrates that a large percentage of those who answered the question (n=206) agreed, suggesting there was widespread jealousy and lateral violence in the community.

CHART 10C: Do You Agree or Disagree with the Statement, "If some Aboriginal people attain financial success, there will be others who will try to put them down"? (Qualitative n=206)



Similarly, 44% of the total TARP sample (n=812) reported Aboriginal people discriminate against other Aboriginal people 23% said that lateral violence was a major issue relating to Aboriginal culture and identity in Toronto.

I think that for me many negative experiences are lateral violence. Everybody gossips about each other. (Key Informant Interview)

The feeling I get is that we are both successful but we are sort of shunned in a way, you know. It's like "you are too high class", but I don't think that I am. I the same person I ever was, because you make a certain amount of money, it because you are trying to better yourself. It's like they are trying to pull you back down so there is a struggle there too. (Middle Class Focus Group)

A lot of it is jealousy...being successful is something you feel guilty about...it's not ok to be successful...Why do you think that is? How do you break the crab phenomenon? (Middle Class Focus Group)

I feel because of my level of education right now...I find a lot of people try to trash about me...it's my own people. (Middle Class Focus Group)

Especially the rich ones. They discriminate against us because they say we make them ashamed to be Native. (Key Informant Interview)

They act like they're too good. (Key Informant Interview)

Aboriginal people seem to get jealous of each other. (Key Informant Interview)

I'm being judged because I've got a decent place. I know how to entertain. I don't think I'm snooty. I'm just giving you the best I can give... Sometimes there can be a bit of hardship because there's rejection or there's judgement or there's belittling. (Life History)

Because a lot of people don't see me drink, and if they do, they are shocked, they are like "oh my god!". All of a sudden I am like this fallen hero. I am kicked off this pedestal and "you are just a drunk like me". I am like, "I am having a beer, relax"... they think that someone is drinking and an alcoholic or they are perfect. And they are not and it's so unfair, and it's unfair to themselves because they are not the worst people either just because they are drinking. (Life History)

My own relatives put me down and say that I have 'sold out'. (Key Informant Interview)

When you are successful other people will always try to drag you down. (Key Informant Interview)

Although not necessarily intentionally, many would have to find new friends especially if they have shifted from being poor to middle class. (Key Informant Interview)

Jealousy is a problem and has been a hidden factor. (Key Informant Interview)

Lateral violence evident both on and off reserve and can be traced to grandparents/parents and residential schools. (Key Informant Interview)

People get jealous of others' successes. Any race traditionally oppressed by colonizers. People doing well – makes others upset. (Key Informant Interview)

Put downs – "oh she/he thinks they are better"...joined the white man's world. Gossip "tell them they have lost their culture"...Poverty is not a culture. (Key Informant Interview)

Your friends will do that to you. You have to change your friends if you quit a bad habit. Change your life and then your friends will say "We are not good enough for you now?" (Key Informant Interview)

There are many factors that could contribute to the significant amount of lateral violence in the urban Aboriginal community. It may be that it is, in part, a carry forward of the cultural practice of gossip and talking of other's behaviour that are mechanisms of social control in

any small community. In communities, including Aboriginal communities where everyone knows each other, pointing out individual inappropriate behaviour was a means of attempting to correct behaviour in order to contribute to the harmonious functioning of the community. Also, in groups which have been oppressed and colonized, it is often the case that negative attitudes and behaviours turned inward toward one's own group, especially when in times of social change and when individual behaviour appears to deviate from the norms of the group. Paulo Freire terms this 'horizontal violence'. The inter-generational effects of residential schools, racism and government attempts to assimilate Aboriginal people have left a lasting legacy of pain and suffering from which Aboriginal people are attempting to heal. Over time, after people have experienced arbitrary punishments they tend to stop trying to do anything constructive. And while Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations have had a major impact in assisting individuals with their 'healing journeys' (including helping many people who are now in the middle class) to overcome their issues there are many people who continue to struggle with issues of poverty, addictions and abuse. Indeed, so respondents stated that, in some cases, Aboriginal peoples' negative experiences have become fixed into a form of 'victimization' or 'social deficit' based on a prevailing image of being characterized by social problems. It may be difficult to get out of a constant state of 'healing' and become 'healthy' and be accepted in the healthy state by those who are not.

The victimization is fixed. When you have made your living demonstrating sickness, it's hard to be taken seriously when you try to demonstrate a healthy lifestyle. (Key Informant Interview)

For any group in the circumstance of Aboriginal people in the city it is difficult to find a balance between recognizing that many people continue to experience serious social problems while, at the same time, recognizing and honouring those who have attained a different lifestyle. Meeting the needs of both groups is integral to building

Chapter 11

HOUSING IN THE TORONTO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

a sustainable urban Aboriginal community in Toronto if Aboriginal culture and identity is to flourish. A central component of that social and cultural maintenance involves the creation of a new set of Aboriginal institutions, including cultural, social and recreational organizations, created to cater to the aspirations of the middle class. If such organizational supports are not established it is fair to assume that increasing numbers of economically successful Aboriginal individuals will leave or distance themselves from the larger Aboriginal community with serious negative effects for the Aboriginal community and culture.

The day of the nuclear family is not here with Aboriginal people. When I lived in social housing in Scarborough, there were three of us that had several dependents, a niece and nephew or an uncle. There isn't social housing that embraces that style of housing. (Aboriginal Women's Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- There is a limited availability of Aboriginal housing units as well as mainstream social housing.
- Housing is related to transition issues for Aboriginal people. Without sufficient support, those in transition from life on the streets, in shelters from prison or from addiction rehabilitation facilities risk jeopardizing their housing situation because they lack the basic skill set to maintain a household.
- Home ownership is increasingly an interest for Aboriginal people in Toronto and for many it has become a reality. For many others, the prospect of home ownership is elusive.
- Unstable or poor housing is connected to many other factors influencing the quality of life for Aboriginal people including health, addictions and employment.

Stable and safe housing is the foundation for a healthy life. With this foundation, all other aspects of day to day living become difficult to manage, and the ability to thrive is limited significantly. The Toronto Aboriginal population has varying experiences with their housing circumstance. The population is spread throughout the city centre into the suburban areas. Low income or geared to income housing specifically for Aboriginal people is scattered through the city and run

various organizations. These organizations are important not only in housing those who are experiencing housing difficulties, but also in advocating for affordable housing for the Aboriginal population.

Housing is an area that was extensively examined throughout this research. Information was gathered through focus groups, life histories, a case study of an Aboriginal housing organization, key informant interviews and in the community survey. Several life history participants faced significant challenges with regards to housing and their experiences are reflected. This chapter will explore the issue of housing for Aboriginal people in Toronto and focus on the following themes: the availability of Aboriginal housing units, transition issues, issues with rental accommodation, safety and affordability, and home ownership.

11.1 Aboriginal Housing in the City of Toronto

After the Second World War, the federal government began funding affordable housing for veterans returning from the war. In the 1960s, the public housing movement began. In Ontario, this took shape through the Ontario Housing Corporation whereby rent was geared to income and the operating costs were shared between the federal and provincial governments. In the 1970s, the burden of public housing shifted to the community and community organizations sprung up in the form of non-profit and cooperative housing projects. Much of the housing that exists today is 'geared to income' (GI). Social housing evolved in the 1980s and 1990s to serve specific populations including those with special developmental needs, mental health patients and the survivors of family violence. In the 1990s, the federal government chose to substantially downgrade its participation in social housing and the burden for funding and management shifted to the municipalities and, to a lesser extent, the provincial government; with local community non-profit agencies running the social housing programs. Currently, the City of Toronto funds more than 40% of the costs of social housing while the province pays 21% and the federal government pays 30%. As well, in addition to non-profit operated social housing, the City also owns and operates social housing directly through Toronto Community Housing, which operates 2/3 of the stock in the city.

In the City of Toronto, the need for affordable housing continues to escalate as the gap between lower and higher income households grows. The City of Toronto waiting list for affordable social housing is about 79,000 households.¹²⁵ In response to this demand, several non-profit organizations were developed to provide housing for Aboriginal people in various life situations and circumstances. Some of the organizations include Nishnawbe Homes Inc., Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes, Anduhyuan Women's Shelter, Wigwamen Inc. Native Men's Residence. A brief description of each is provided at the end of this chapter.

11.2 Major Themes for Aboriginal Housing

Aboriginal housing was identified as an important topic and linked to many other topics such as poverty, homelessness and justice. The interconnected nature of housing is indicative of how foundational secure housing is to day-to-day existence as well as long-term stability. Housing is also considered a 'social determinant of health' and is linked to much broader health status issues and this is discussed further in this chapter.

The community survey provided important insights into the most pressing housing issues concerning Aboriginal people. The responses indicated that 52% felt it was accessible, affordability and availability, 22% felt that their housing was inadequate or overcrowded, 14% indicated that there was an overall lack of Aboriginal housing and 8% indicated that there were long waiting lists. A survey respondent made note of the interconnected nature of housing:

People cannot afford housing which adds to drug/alcohol addictions and makes it harder to get housing/seek help. (Community Survey Response)

The following issues within the topic of housing were identified and will be explored further with the qualitative and quantitative data: availability of Aboriginal housing units, transition issues, issues with rental accommodation, safety and affordability and home ownership

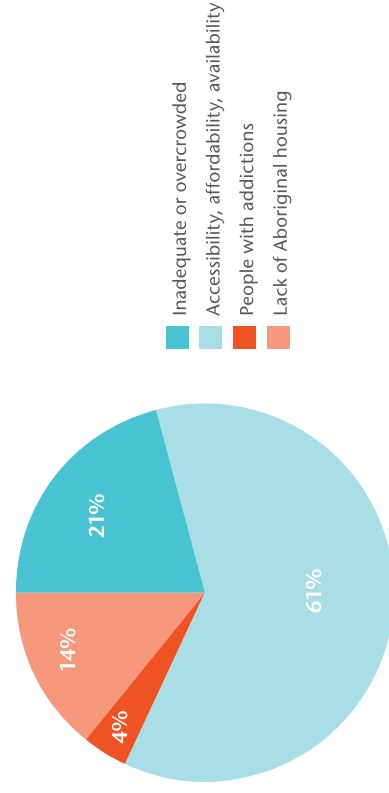
125 <http://www.housingconnections.ca/information/Reports.asp>.

11.2.1 Availability of Aboriginal Housing Units

Aboriginal housing is not a new phenomenon in an urban context. Many cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg and Saskatoon have had long standing Aboriginal housing programs to support the transition of Aboriginal people to an urban context or provide important housing supports for urban Aboriginal people. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study of Toronto found that 91% of their respondents identified Aboriginal housing as an important service to exist in addition to non-Aboriginal ones.¹²⁶

There are a variety of affordable housing options for Aboriginal people in Toronto. Some of these options include GI, subsidized and transition housing. While these options exist specifically for Aboriginal people, the reality is that there is a significant waiting period to secure an Aboriginal housing unit. This was reflected in the interview data in Chart 11A which shows that 14% of respondents consider there to be a lack of Aboriginal housing. Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents felt that housing issues related to accessibility, affordability and availability.

CHART 11A: Major Housing Issues Concerning Aboriginal People Living in Toronto/GTA (Qualitative n=173)



Access to Aboriginal housing is not equal for all Aboriginal people in Toronto and is often dependent on the circumstance of the individual and their family. Respondents discussed the difficulties for certain segments of the population in acquiring Aboriginal housing. Some respondents indicated that it was easier for small families or single people to secure Aboriginal housing. In some cases, these difficulties are related to the difficult situations that many respondents are coming from. This is reflected by this respondent:

Native housing agencies are not geared for guys; they're geared for either working people or families. They should put some of their money they get to create a system that can help guys, not just leaving it for us, because a lot of guys don't have the skills to get out there and do that for themselves. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Some of these housing challenges are also related to challenges transitioning from a shelter, drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation or living on the streets into a housing situation. Aboriginal people experiencing such a transition are often more vulnerable to limited access to housing than those in more stable life circumstances. These specific transition issues are discussed in the following section.

Two-spirited people also identified housing as an issue for them. Extensive discussion in the two-spirited focus group indicated that it was difficult to secure housing, particularly in the downtown core due to the high cost of rent and the racism experienced from landlords. The housing experience of one two-spirited research participant is indicated in a life history:

He has lived in the village, and now resides in the east end. When he is working he can afford a good place. When he is not working he has to downgrade. He is living in Toronto as long as it's not dangerous. He moved 3-4 times and he rents his apartment. (Life History Respondent)

Participants in the two-spirit focus group also indicated that many subsidized or community run housing is located outside of the downtown area, posing safety issues unique to two-spirited people, such as discrimination on the basis of physical appearance (i.e. not yet 'passing' for one's desired gender identification) or judgement based on lifestyle choices.

126 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Ottawa: Environics.

In addition, subsidized and community housing is considered unsafe and undesirable due to the prevalence of drugs, fear of physical violence and noise levels. It is difficult to exit unsafe and demoralizing housing situations and these difficulties impact other areas of one's life. The focus group identified that Aboriginal specific housing is considered to be unsuitable for long term living and the waiting times for housing are unrealistically long. Respondents indicated that two-spirit-specific housing is highly desired, and it would be ideal to consider the development of dedicated two-spirited housing to meet the particular needs of two-spirited people. Housing is a large and central issue for two-spirited people and a considerable amount of time within the focus group was spent discussing this issue. Housing which is appropriate for two-spirited people must be centrally located, affordable and safe from multiple forms of systemic and physical discrimination.

11.2.2 Transition Issues

Many Aboriginal people who are within the current housing system have faced challenges associated with finding and securing stable housing. Subsequently, they may be in subsidized or geared to income housing as a part of their transition from a less stable housing situation, such as living on the street. The data indicated that despite the existence of several subsidized and GI housing organizations in the city, there are still considerable gaps for those who are transitioning from situations of incarceration, life on the streets, in a shelter, or a drug/alcohol rehabilitation/healing centre. The transition issues facing this particular set of group are related to developing skill sets and capacity to remain in their current housing situation or to move to a market rent housing situation. These challenges were indicated by this focus group respondent:

There are rooms everywhere, but coming out of a place like this, trying to get into a room, into somebody's house, it's pretty much impossible. (Homelessness Focus Group)

As described in one housing focus group, some of these issues are related to day to day living needs such as basic housekeeping to more advanced

issues like money management. The support required in transitioning someone from a situation like living on the street or incarceration to single accommodation is significant. Some organizations such as Na-Me-Res provide such follow up (one year minimum); however, reality is that many organizations are overburdened and operate with minimal human resource capacity to support the complex needs of those in rapid transition. This is consistent with the findings of the 2008 Final Report on *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto* by Jim Ward Associates. In discussions with agency staff, major challenges associated with homelessness include "insufficient appropriate/affordable housing, with support service"¹²⁷ being ranked as the number one challenge. This report also indicated that the major gap in housing services was the support that was required. Specifically, they quoted a respondent as:

*We need the supports to take care of people, programs that go out there and support them, rehab programs, TTC tokens, court support persons, advocacy, housing aftercare. There's no point in housing without the supports. Otherwise they are just being set up to fail.*¹²⁸

This report also concluded that there was a lack of appropriate affordable housing, specifically with regards to "transitional housing, with a high level of supports to overcome the day-to-day exigencies of life in the city".¹²⁹

Housing transition issues are complex because of the foundational nature of housing. It is both a requirement for a stable and successful life as well as a stable life is required to maintain this life. This complexity is reflected in the following quote from a housing focus group participant:

Life skills are not just financial planning and résumé writing. When people move from the shelter into the street into accommodations they need to learn how to cook and how to clean. That's one of the reasons they get evicted and they become anti-social. They become hoarders and get cockroaches. The need to know how to recycle, how to do laundry, how to store their food and how to c

127 Jim Ward Associates. (2008). *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto*. Toronto: Jim Ward Associates.

128 Ibid

129 Ibid

their refrigerator. So there are two sides, the business side and the living side. It's not just enough to take people off the street; they need to have skills to live properly. (Housing Focus Group)

They are taken from a shelter where they are told when to get up, when to eat. It's so regimented. Sometimes they don't know, sometimes they were never taught something as basic as home economics. They don't have those things anymore. Not everyone comes from the benefit of having a mother and father and were taught how to do things. It's overwhelming for them, for their landlords and the community they live in. (Housing Focus Group)

Youth in transition can also be a vulnerable part of the Aboriginal urban population. Youth transition issues were also indicated in this focus group. Linton et al (2009) discusses some of this vulnerability in their Toronto research on youth and HIV status: "the transient nature of the street youth way of life is characterized by a lack of stable housing, which often leads its members to live under bridges, in homeless shelters, or in the street."¹³⁰ They discuss the inability of many of these vulnerable youth to have the skills required to financially support themselves, or to navigate the social service agencies they are often more likely to participate in high risk behaviour.

The respondents indicated that there were gaps for youth who may be dealing with mental health or addiction issues and those who were genuinely interested in pursuing a positive life. One respondent discussed this gap in Toronto's Aboriginal housing:

I wish I had transitional housing for students. Not just putting them into 'Turning Point' or 'Covenant'. The kids that go through those places, the kids there don't have their frame of mind intact. A lot of the kids that run away from home need to, but there are others that run away because they just didn't want to follow the rules that their parents gave them. Our kids have to mingle with those types of kids. (Middle Class Focus Group)

It's bad enough we didn't have those supports in our own community, now we are going to go to be with a couple of kids that don't even want those supports. If

there was a program like the University of Toronto does, where they get a chance to see university life in the summer, so they learn about the university experience so they would want it. But that's only in the summer. (Housing Focus Group)

Housing organizations such as Nishnawbe Homes have seen diverse in their tenant base, including more youth requiring housing. Due to the close location of some of their units to post secondary institutions like Ryerson, Nishnawbe Homes has found they have an increasing student population. This was mentioned by one life history respondent

I have some elders who are here. I have some young kids that go to college or university here. I've got some that are out of work, some on ODSP, I've got all kinds of people. They were somebody's child with a future, where their parents said 'I could be the next prime minister of the country'". (Life History Respondent)

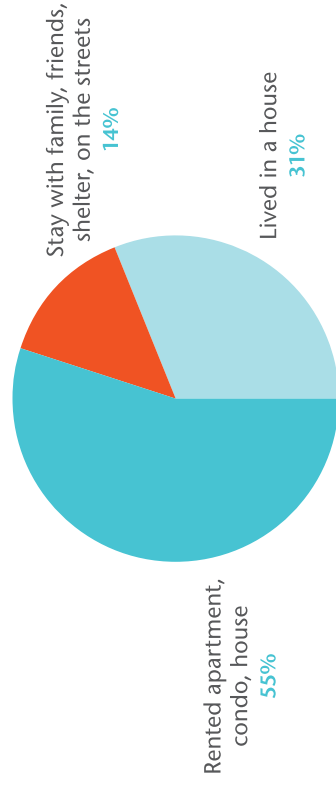
This new type of tenant has resulted in a diversity of the population in Nishnawbe Homes' population providing opportunities for other Aboriginal people to engage with those who are attending post secondary school and, for those students, to have a network of people to support and encourage their success.

11.2.3 Issues with Rental Accommodation

Renting is prevalent amongst the Aboriginal population in Toronto. A large proportion of Aboriginal people rent rather than own their home. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of survey respondents indicated that they rented their accommodation (Chart 11B). The community survey also reveals that 55% of respondents either rent an apartment or condominium or rent a room in a house. The majority of respondents who rent are female (59%). This is consistent with the Aboriginal Housing Consultation Report in 2008 which found that 71.8% of their respondents were renting their accommodation.

130 Linton, A.B., Singh, M.D., Turbow, D. & Legg, T.J. (2009). Street Youth in Toronto, Canada: An Investigation of Demographic Predictors of HIV Status Among Street Youth Who Access Preventive Health and Social Services. *Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services*, 8(4), 375-396.

CHART 11B: Housing Situation of Respondents (Qualitative n=807)



The issue of landlords was also discussed by the TARP respondents, with many who revealed that they had strained relationships with their landlords or other tenants in the building. Chart 11C illustrates the responses to questions concerning the inadequacy of their housing situation. The quantitative data showed that 14% of respondents felt that their building was unclean or unsanitary. According to the 2008 Aboriginal Housing Consultation Report, 25% of their respondents indicated that they were concerned about the safety in their home or in the immediate area as well as the cleanliness and sanitation of their unit.¹³¹

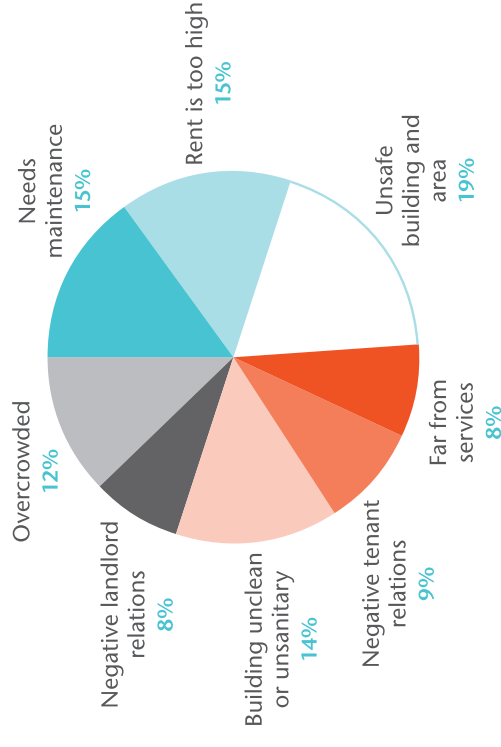
Related to the condition of their building, another 8% revealed that they experienced negative landlord relations. Focus group responses also confirmed the dissatisfaction of Aboriginal people with their landlord situation:

There are many people who live in substandard housing who have irresponsible landlords. (Homelessness Focus Group)

The possibilities for housing for Aboriginal people subsequently concludes with remaining on waiting lists, possibly for years at a time, or paying high market rents if the tenant meets the requirements of the landlord which may include consistent income, good credit checks and references. For many Aboriginal people, this is not possible, so they continue to be challenged when it comes to securing quality, stable housing.

131 Nishnawbe Homes, Miziwe Bliik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report*.

CHART 11C: Reason for Inadequate Housing (Qualitative n=642)



11.2.4 Safety and Affordability

Like all urban centres, Toronto has pockets of the city that are known for higher crime rates and poor quality housing. Inadequate housing and poverty are closely linked. As Williams (1997) discusses, the economic status of Aboriginals emerges as perhaps the most serious limiting condition in obtaining satisfactory housing.¹³²

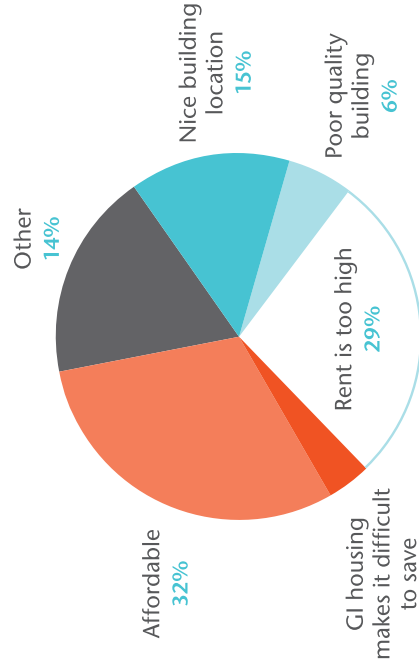
The commonly held belief that the rent in Toronto is higher compared to other urban centres in Canada was confirmed by the respondents to this research. Out of the reasons cited for Aboriginal poverty, 17% of survey respondents indicated that housing was a major factor related to Aboriginal poverty. Interview respondents also indicated housing was the third main cause of poverty (17%). One element of inadequate housing also relates to the amount of physical space of accommodation. Many Aboriginal families need larger spaces because they are housing family members outside of their immediate nuclear families. As a way to share the burden of living, many Aboriginal

132 Williams, A. (1997). *Urban Aboriginals: A Focus on Aboriginal Women in Toronto*. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, XVII, 1, 75-101, p 91.

families find themselves sharing their space with other extended family members as a means of accessing additional economic support.¹³³

The lack of affordable housing cited as the top cause of Aboriginal poverty in the City of Toronto in the community survey followed by addiction issues and lack of education. However, when asked in the interview questions whether respondents were satisfied with the rent that they pay, only 29% indicated that their rent was too high (Chart 11D) and 32% indicated that their rent was affordable. This may be due to the number of people who are living in subsidized housing, or their higher incomes.

CHART 11D: Are You Satisfied With Your Rent? (Qualitative n=101)



There was a significant disparity between those earning higher incomes versus lower incomes and whether respondents felt they had stable housing. As one respondent indicated in a community survey:

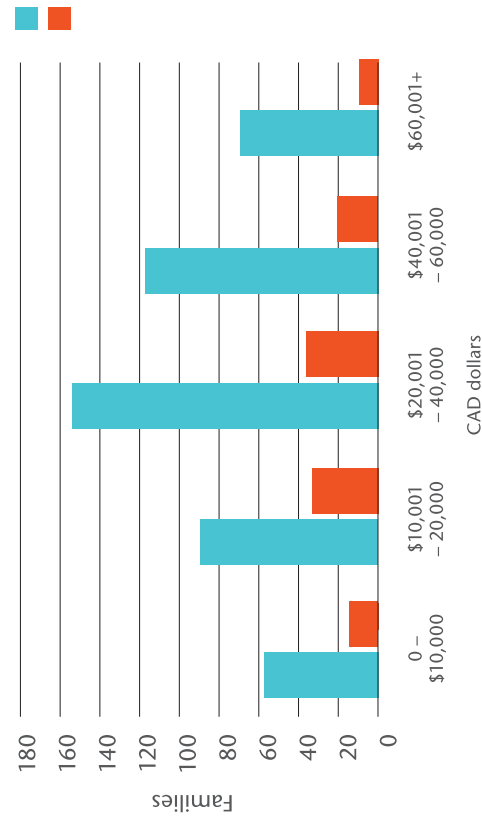
Housing of an adequate nature is quite costly. (Community Survey Response)

133 Mavidman, F., & Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting. (1981). *Native people in urban settings: Problems, needs, and services*. Toronto: Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting.

Affordability was also identified as a key area in the 2008 Aboriginal Housing Consultation Report. Their findings indicate that housing and utility costs were the biggest expenses for Aboriginal households. They found that the average monthly rent reported from tenants was \$937 per month and the average mortgage cost reported was \$1,658 per month. Utility bills were also discussed in their research and almost 30% indicated that they had difficulty paying their bills and almost 20% had experienced having their utilities cut off due to non-payment.¹³⁴

As Chart 11E shows, the higher the income, the more likely a respondent is to feel that their housing situation is stable. This is evident in the increasing distance between the bars as income increases. A higher income may mean a professional level permanent position, savings or a spouse with a high income which means that the threat of loss of their current housing situation is less of a concern. As we see from the data on home ownership below; those with higher incomes are more likely to be home owners.

CHART 11E: Stable Housing by Total Family Income (Qualitative n=624)



134 Nishawbe Homes, Miziwe Bliik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report*.

Safety was another issue identified in the data. There was a large proportion of respondents in the survey (19%) who indicated the location and safety of the building as reasons for their inadequate housing situation. This was also reflected in the interviews when respondents were asked what they disliked about their housing situation. Nineteen percent (19%) indicated that they thought they lived in a bad neighbourhood or location. This may be related to living in low income areas where there is a higher proportion of crime.

11.2.5 Home Ownership

Owning a home can be a tremendous burden, but also provides an investment for the future. In order to purchase a home, home owners must have a down payment, usually at least 5% plus closing costs as well as a solid credit rating and stable employment. Home ownership was considered a challenge for many Aboriginal respondents. In a focus group at an Aboriginal housing organization, one staff person indicated:

In 16 years we have only had two people moved into home ownership. (Housing Focus Group)

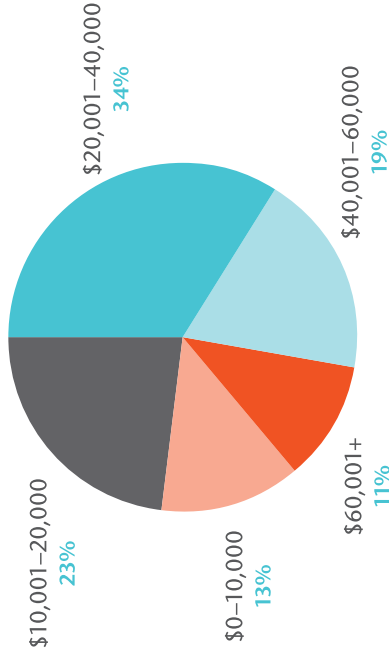
The potential for home ownership is intimidating for many Aboriginal people. However, 19% of survey respondents indicated that they owned a home. As one respondent indicated:

I don't have the resources and it's a bit daunting to think of what I need; my credit rating, how to get the place and maintain it. I just don't know where to go. (Housing Focus Group)

There is an obvious link between higher incomes and higher home ownership. The following chart shows that of those renting, they primarily occupy total family incomes of less than \$40,000 per year. The survey data revealed a correlation between the higher total family income and home ownership, and lower family income and likelihood of renting. For example 89% of people who rent have a total family income of less than \$60,000 per year, while those earning over \$60,000 per year are less likely to rent (Chart 11F). This contrasts with the relationship between home ownership and total family income.

There were still home owners in the lower income earning brackets. For example, 8% of home owners earned less than \$20,000 per year. This may be attributed to respondents who are retired and living on pension income. Of the respondents who were home owners, 31% were earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year and 46% of home owners were earning greater than \$60,000 per year. Some similar information was found from the 2008 Aboriginal Housing Consultation Report. In terms of income, they found that one in four households, or 25% earned incomes between \$45,000 and \$70,000 per year, “which would allow them to comfortably afford most Toronto rents, but still not have enough income to move into the home ownership market”.¹³⁵

CHART 11F: Total Family Income by Renters (Qualitative n=557)



Owning a home can provide people with a sense of permanence as well as provide a stable foundation for raising a family. For those who are coming from a First Nation community to a situation where they may be sharing accommodation, it may not feel like such a difference. One respondent describes this:

We rented when we were first married and then had the two kids. I didn't find it was terrible because my aunt had nine kids in one bedroom. Any place we went to were small reserve houses and people were stacked up. (Life History Respondent)

135 Nishnawbe Homes, Mizwiwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report.*

However, owning a home can provide a sense of permanency and consistency as well as motivation to achieve financial success. This is important for children and youth who can become traumatized by constant moving around. Another respondent discusses the motivation for owning a home:

Home ownership is not a priority for native people, but it was for me because we always had a house. Apartment dwelling was not something that we did. You had a house and neighbours and you had roots. (Life History Respondent)

There have been efforts in the Aboriginal community to promote the possibilities around home ownership. Miziwe Biik Development Corporation has a program in which they partner with banks, mortgage brokers and real estate agents to begin the process of home ownership for community memberships. The Aboriginal Downpayment Loan Program is funded through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. This program was described by one of the focus group respondents:

Miziwe Biik has put on sessions on home ownership. They have an agreement with a bank and mortgage broker and real estate agent. There is the off reserve Aboriginal trust fund that goes to assisting qualified applicants. If you have a bad credit rating, no one will look at you. People need assistance and if they have a bad credit they need to know how to fix it. This is a new program with Miziwe Biik. (Housing Focus Group)

Along with these programs, Aboriginal people must be aware of the requirements of home ownership, which include a stable income as well as good credit rating. One respondent indicated:

For home ownership, credit rating is important. One bad mark on your credit rating can ruin it for years. Where do we go for that knowledge on credit rating? I want to know the whole big picture. (Housing Focus Group)

It can be expected that as more Aboriginal people become financially mobile, the prospects for home ownership will increase. This may result in Aboriginal people moving out of the downtown areas due to the high cost of housing in the downtown core, and instead move into suburban areas of Toronto. This may have an impact on their participation in Aboriginal cultural events and organizations.

11.3 Housing as a Social Determinant of Health

Often poor conditions of housing or overcrowding of housing reserves is linked to low health status and the higher prevalence of physical disease¹³⁶ such as tuberculosis as well as mental health issues and addictions. However, these same impacts to health also exist in urban Aboriginal people also living under poor housing conditions. While lack of access to safe drinking water may not be so prevalent in an urban context, dealing with bad landlords, unsafe areas in the and unsanitary buildings also contributes to poor health.

The link between housing and poor health was also discussed in 2008 Aboriginal Housing Consultation Report. This report cites some of the impacts of poor housing on health.¹³⁷ These include physical impacts (personal health suffers from being homeless, poor housing saps energy and the ability to stay clean, get a job, decent food, leads directly to sickness, diabetes, higher risk of disease, a gen wear and tear on the body). This report also discusses the mental impacts of poor housing (lose their pride, makes it hard to concentrate on getting employment and leads to drugs, alcohol, suicide and breakdown in mental health, depression, hopelessness low self esteem).

The daily struggle for shelter is highly burdensome for those who face housing challenges. One TARP survey respondent stated in this manner:

Housing is a very basic concern for everyone. Without it, it is difficult to move forward and tackle other challenges in life. (Community Survey Response)

It is important as we consider the various issues surrounding housing that we also consider the broader impact that those who face housing

¹³⁶ For further reading on social determinants of health for Aboriginal people, refer to “Sharing Knowledge, Making a Difference” by the National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health available at http://www.ncccah-ccnsa.ca/docs/ncccah%20reports/1683_NCCAH_activityreporto web.pdf.

¹³⁷ Nishnawbe Homes, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report.*

challenges also cope with in other areas of their lives. Housing is an important foundation for a healthy life, and without it, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is compromised.

Housing the urban Aboriginal population has increasingly become a challenge as more and more Aboriginal people migrate to urban communities. The City of Toronto faces significant obstacles for Aboriginal people who may be leaving their own communities due to housing shortages, to only find that housing in the city is also difficult.

For Aboriginal people living in Toronto, the availability of housing units geared to Aboriginal people is limited. Waiting lists are long and unrealistic, and other mainstream subsidized housing programs are difficult to access and often offer sub-standard accommodation. Two-spirited people also faced challenges unique to their own community in terms of housing. Housing is a specific challenge for those who are transitioning from other situations such as life in a shelter, on the streets, incarceration or coming out of a drug or alcohol rehabilitation facility. The transition issues relate specifically to the ability to secure regular accommodation due to affordability as well as lack of references or stable income, as well as lack of life skills in order to remain housed. There are some organizations that provide services to assist people in transition, however it was identified that there is a greater demand for such services.

The respondents also identified several issues relating to their accommodation. Some respondents experienced challenges with their landlords; specifically a proportion felt that their building was unclean or unsanitary. There was also discussion of the affordability and safety of housing. This is closely linked to poverty, and housing was indicated to be a major factor when it came to Aboriginal poverty. Those who earned higher incomes tended to view their housing situation as stable compared to those with less income. Low incomes were connected to the perception of the safety of the neighbourhood in which the respondents resided.

Home ownership was a reality for some Aboriginal respondents; however it was considered a distant prospect for many. There has been

little movement from subsidized Aboriginal housing situations to home ownership, and much of the challenges relate directly to the family income. As the income increased, so did the likelihood of home ownership. Aboriginal agencies are taking proactive steps in developing programs to encourage developing strategies for Aboriginal people to become home owners and build equity.

As the housing needs for Aboriginal people become increasingly apparent, Aboriginal organizations are attempting to respond with their limited resources. Miziwe Biik Development Corporation Nishnawbe Homes Inc. is an example of organizations working laboratively to provide housing solutions for Aboriginal people. We see however that the need for housing persists, along with the specific housing needs (i.e. transition services). Accessing stable and secure housing is an important step in setting up a foundation for a successful and happy urban existence for Aboriginal people, and we continue to be at the forefront of discussions. As one focus group respondent noted, it was important to have secure housing because

If you don't have a base to work from, nothing gets done. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Having stable and secure housing is an important foundation for a positive and successful life. As Aboriginal people find themselves struggling for housing, many other facets of their lives can become jeopardized such as maintaining custody of their children and fall into negative behaviours such as addictions. Housing must be considered a central component in the development of a healthy Aboriginal community or as the above respondent indicated, “nothing gets done”

11.4 Aboriginal Housing Organizations

Aboriginal housing organizations in Toronto provide housing for various needs. Nishnawbe Homes Inc., for example, provides geared income housing, while Na-Me-Res provides transitional housing for men specifically. The following is a brief description of the Aboriginal housing organizations in Toronto.

11.4.1 Nishnawbe Homes Inc.

Nishnawbe Homes Inc. was founded in 1984 and was allocated 49 units from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the Urban Native Housing Program across 10 properties in Toronto. In 2007, Nishnawbe Homes purchased and renovated a 62-unit building called Zhaawngong Gamik, or the Church Street South House. This building houses the main administration. Nishnawbe Homes Inc. has accumulated several properties and managed to house more than 1,500 people over the years. In 2011, a new building is being established at the corner of Dundas and Parliament Street in partnership with Miziwe Biik Development Corporation. This new residence will meet the demands for their non-traditional tenants, that is, those who are financially stable, but still requiring lower than market rent accommodations. Nishnawbe Homes' traditional tenants are those who are transitioning from a shelter and/or a homeless situation to accommodation who face significant challenges with regards to employment, life skills and family. The clientele for Nishnawbe Homes has shifted and they are now also serving students from local colleges and universities.

11.4.2 Gabriel Dumont

Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes (Metro Toronto) Inc., is a centralized 87-unit Aboriginal apartment and townhouse complex that opened in 1986. This complex has three and four bedroom units which are located in the east part of Toronto. This project is funded by CMHC. Gabriel Dumont is a subsidized housing project which provides housing for Aboriginal people on a geared to income basis.

11.4.3 Anduhyuan Women's Shelter

The Anduhyuan Women's Shelter is one of Canada's oldest shelters and provides specific programs and services to Aboriginal women with or without children who are leaving an abusive situation. Within Anduhyuan, Nekenaan Second Stage Housing is a program which provides temporary housing to Aboriginal housing for women as they

move from an abusive domestic situation into their new life. This recently renovated six-storey building with 24 furnished units, some of which are single occupancy and some are shared. These units are also for women and her children.

11.4.4 Wigwamen Inc.

Wigwamen Inc. has been operating as one of Ontario's largest urban Native housing providers. They have 210 units throughout the City of Toronto, as well as a 92-unit apartment building for families and seniors in Scarborough. Additionally, they have a 103-unit apartment complex for seniors in downtown Toronto. As well as providing housing programs in Toronto, they have housing programs throughout Ontario.

11.4.5 Native Men's Residence

The Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res) opened its doors in 1988 as an emergency shelter for men without a place to live. As the need for the Aboriginal homeless population emerged, Na-Me-Res responded with programs designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal homeless men within a culturally responsive strengths-based management approach. The Men's Residence provides clients with temporary shelter, as well as assistance and support to secure appropriate shelter for their needs. They currently have a 63-bed residence. Na-Me-Res also provides outreach to those who live on the streets and in seasonal shelters by providing them with support as they transition from the streets to homes. This support includes minimum follow up of one year. Na-Me-Res also provides traditional services through culture based workshops and activities for the clients as well as group and individual healing sessions through Visiting Elders. They also have a program called Sagatay which is a three to six month interactive learning program in communication, information management, personal management, teamwork, Aboriginal studies, and healthy living and employability skills. Specialized response programs are provided for those clients who are dealing with mental health and addiction issues.

ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO

Some people who come to Toronto carry shame because of their family and do not consider going for help because there is alcoholism or drug abuse within their family and they do not want to disclose to anyone new. They stay on the street and get worse. (Homelessness Focus Group)

This chapter is a ‘study within a study’ in that funding was received to specifically study Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto, and is part of a broader TARP study. This component of the project aims to understand how homelessness affects Aboriginal people, both in terms of the unique social and cultural factors in being an Aboriginal person, as well as within the broader context of homelessness in Toronto. The results of this study have identified important aspects of how Aboriginal people understand and experience homelessness in Toronto and indicate that there are specific areas of importance that transcend the many and varying personal experiences of participants.

Homelessness remains a significant issue in Toronto, and Aboriginal homelessness in particular involves unique aspects that require specific investigation and consideration. Indeed, it has been “observed that the Aboriginal population was over-represented in the homeless population and that they were particularly visible on the street”.¹³⁸

138 Golden, A., Currie, W. H., Greaves, E., & Latimer, E. J. (1999), *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*, Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force, City of Toronto, p 64.

One study reported that in 1996 it was estimated that 16% of homeless people in Toronto were Aboriginal.¹³⁹ The 2009 Street Needs Assessment demonstrates that the number of Aboriginal people who are homeless has remained the same in the 14 year period. The Needs Assessment estimated that overall 15.4% of people who are homeless identified as Aboriginal and a higher, 28.7% of people who are homeless and living outdoors identified as Aboriginal.¹⁴⁰

Thus, there is no doubt that homelessness among the urban Aboriginal people in Toronto is a very serious problem. The participants in the study identify a number of common themes related to homelessness as well as additional issues that are specific to their experience as Aboriginal and homeless individuals.

A lack of substantial literature offering a detailed understanding of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto was identified in a study by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (1997) and continues to be an ongoing challenge, along with a number of other issues discussed in that report and others that overlap with those presented here.

Particularly challenging issues facing Aboriginal homeless people include substance abuse, housing and employment. The issues of transportation and accessing services and social assistance were commonly emphasized by participants in this study. Discrimination and racism, and perceptions that homeless Aboriginal people are often seen as the least priority and looked at negatively, were also underlying issues present throughout the themes that emerged in this study.

12.1 Methodology

The research methodology utilized in this component of the study included in-depth interviews with a broad sample (n=140) of Aboriginal homeless people, three focus groups of Aboriginal homeless

139 Jim Ward Associates. (2008). *Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto*. Toronto: Jim Ward Associates. and Golden, A., Currie, W. H., Greaves, E., & Latimer, E. J. (1999), *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*, Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force, City of Toronto, p 64.

140 <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-29123.pdf>.

people, a photovoice project with homeless Aboriginal youth and three life histories with individuals who are currently or have been homeless. The interviews involved the administration of a 49-item interview guide to 140 homeless people in Toronto. The sample included homeless people in a variety of circumstances including those living on the street, those accessing shelters and drop-in centres, those who were 'couch-surfing', Aboriginal men, women, youth and seniors, single mothers, two-spirited people and those involved in the justice system. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations including shelters and drop-in centres, on the street, in restaurants and coffee shops and in private homes. Interviews were conducted by four Aboriginal Research Assistants.

The three focus groups were facilitated and recorded by four Research Assistants and were held in Aboriginal agencies (Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, Native Men's Residence and the Native Women's Resource Centre). A total of 25 Aboriginal people participated in the focus groups. Participants in the focus groups were asked to discuss several questions: "What are the important issues facing Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto?", "What do you need in the city to have a more stable situation for yourself?", "What is a typical day for you?", "What are some of the more effective programs that are currently being utilized by the Aboriginal homeless in Toronto and how can they be improved?", and "Do you feel that an Aboriginal Healing Centre is necessary in Toronto?".

The photovoice component of the project involved 12 street involved youth who participated in the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (ALST) and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) youth groups. Youth were given cameras and trained how to use them by two members of NCFST, Seventh Gen Photography Group. Youth were asked to take pictures of their daily life activities and write short descriptions of the photos. Of the several hundred photos taken, 15 were printed into collages and displayed at Toronto City Hall during National Aboriginal Week in June, 2010.

The three life histories involved a street involved youth who has lived in Toronto all his life and who has been in conflict with the law, two First Nations individuals born outside Toronto, adopted out to white families, who experienced unstable family relations and alcohol addictions and are currently residing in a residential facility.

This chapter provides a description and discussion of the findings of the homelessness component of the TARP study. The charts and graphs presented reflect the answers given by 140 interview respondents. Also included are data, reflections and direct quotations from the three focus groups and three life histories.

12.2 Demographics

Among the 140 respondents interviewed for this portion of the TARP study, the most common demographic of the Aboriginal homeless population are single males between the ages of 25-44 who identify as a status First Nation person. This is generally consistent with the findings of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (1997) study that found that the majority of Aboriginal homeless individuals to be males in the 30-45 age category. The same report estimated that there are between 5,000 and 10,000 homeless Aboriginal people in Toronto (Ibid.).¹⁴² Of the 140 respondents interviewed, 66% were male, 30% were female and 4% were two-spirited as illustrated in Chart 12A. These percentages are similar to a study that was done with a representative sample of 283 people that found that of the homeless Aboriginal people in Toronto 72.5% were male, 25% female and 1.1% were transgender (1.4% unknown).¹⁴²

141 Ibid

142 Jim Ward and Associates (2008), *Dealing Effectively With Homelessness in Toronto: Final Report*.

CHART 12A: Gender Distribution of Respondents (Homeless Interviews n=139)

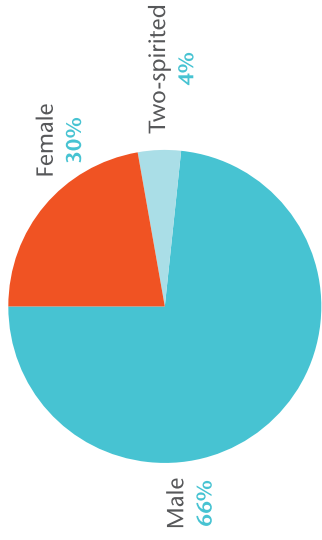
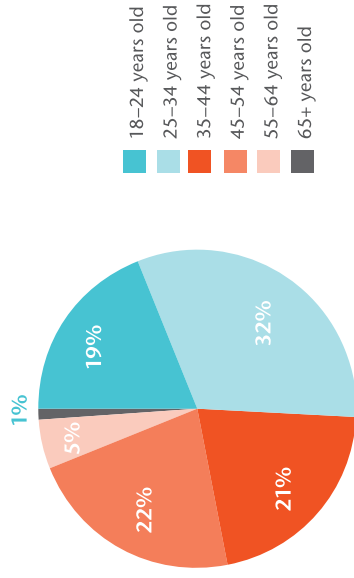


Chart 12B demonstrates that the vast majority of Aboriginal homeless people (75%) are between the ages of 25 and 54, with few (6%) over the age of 55. It is clear that the hardships of being homeless make it difficult for older individuals to survive. There is also a significant number (19%) of younger people who are homeless. This could have serious consequences for the future adjustment of Aboriginal people to Toronto generally as large numbers of homeless young people who are unable to find a stable economic existence and who experience a myriad of problems such as addictions, welfare dependence and family instability means that there will be serious problems with future generations of urban Aboriginal residents. A large number of respondents reported that once an individual is homeless it is difficult to break the cycle and get off the streets into a more stable situation.

CHART 12B: Age Ranges of Respondents (Homeless Interviews n=140)



A surprisingly large percentage (81%) of the respondents identified themselves as Status Indians. This is an indication that many individual members of First Nation communities are unable to successfully adjust to living in a large urban centre.

Also a surprisingly large percentage, (54%) of those interviewed in the present study responded that they have children, but it is interesting to note that of those who do have children, 97% stated they do not live with their children. This finding reflects the obvious difficulty of living with children in a homeless situation and also indicates that gender is not the determining factor in whether an individual lives with his or her children. There is currently no data describing the living situations of participants' children, including if participants are single parents or whether their children live with other family members. During a focus group for men, one participant expressed that housing is particularly difficult:

Especially because most of us are fathers. (Homelessness Focus Group)

In this discussion, it was indicated that one reason for many people not living with their children is because parents are looking for affordable housing in order to be able to provide for their children.

12.2.1 Past and Present Living Situations

The individuals interviewed, as well as those who participated in focus groups, described a variety of experiences in their lives that have led to their current situation of being homeless. Perception of homelessness by people as a homogenous group with the same background reasons for being homeless fail to represent the important differences in people's experiences and histories. Often, homeless individuals move from one living situation or one city to another as a result of past conditions, present conditions, or prospects for the future. Participants in this study represented a broad range of experiences in terms of their past and present living situations, and the events in their lives that have contributed to their current circumstances. Many of the past experiences that were major contributing factors

participants' homelessness are wide ranging and multi-faceted, and are critical to understanding their present situations and determining future actions to address homelessness.

12.3 Movement of Homeless Populations to Toronto

The interview data indicates that the majority of the Aboriginal homeless population currently living in Toronto was born outside of the city (65%) as shown in Chart 12C and moved to Toronto area within the last 30 years (Chart 12D), which, given the most common age range of participants being 25-44 years of age, suggests that many people moved to Toronto when they were young, possibly when they initially became homeless.

CHART 12C: Place of Birth (Homeless Interviews n=90)

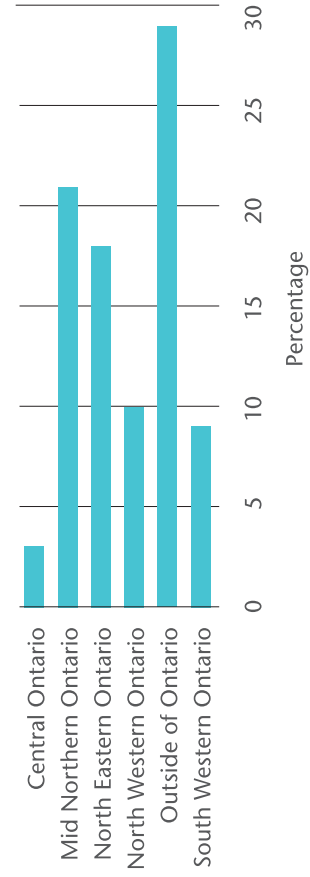
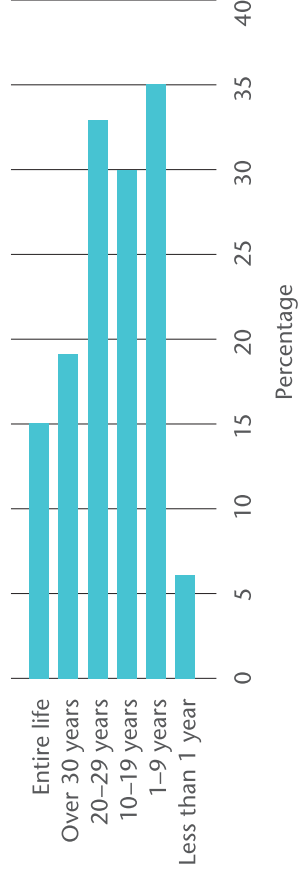


CHART 12D: Time Lived in Toronto (Homeless Interviews n=136)



The majority of respondents (62%) have lived in Toronto for more than 10 years. But 66% of respondents reported being homeless for five years or less. This implies that a significant number of current homeless Aboriginal people have not been homeless for their entire time living in Toronto.

My sister had moved out when she was 17 and moves to Toronto... She's the closest relation I have. I wanted to get back to Ontario where I was born. I've been in Toronto since 1989...I worked at one place for two months and we would come to work hung-over and couldn't do anything...The first time I went to jail was I hung around High Park. By this time, I had turned into an alcoholic...By this time I wasn't living with my sister, so I was living on the street. (Life History)

Another respondent indicated:

I've only been in Toronto for four months now and this [Native Women's Resource Centre] is the only centre I know. I feel safe here. (Homelessness Focus Group)

There appears to have been a significant reduction in people moving to Toronto from 2000-2004, and a notable increase from 2005 to the present. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of participants stated that they have been homeless for 1 to 5 years as shown in Chart 12E.

CHART 12E: Length of Time Homeless (Homeless Interviews n=138)



In addition, 43% of individuals, the largest sub-group of people born outside Toronto, were also born outside Ontario. In a focus group discussion, one individual explained that being from outside of Ontario

originally has made it more challenging for him to access the services available to homeless people in Toronto, because he is not aware of what exists. Of those interview participants born outside Toronto, 44% stated that they maintain links to their communities of origin. Interestingly, 20% of participants born outside Toronto were originally from communities in central Ontario, and this group comprises the largest percentage of people maintaining links with their communities of origin, more than double the number of people born outside Ontario who still maintain links with their communities. This could be due, in part, to the challenges related to geographical distance in maintaining links with communities outside Ontario, or to other factors that have contributed to people leaving their communities of origin.

Participants stated in focus group discussions and interview responses that they decided to move to Toronto to access the services and opportunities that they felt were more available in Toronto, with 29% of respondents stating that seeking employment was their main reason for moving to Toronto (Table 12A). One participant told a story of being on the streets in another city and needing to leave because he was involved with gangs and was concerned that it would eventually lead him to a violent path. He explained that there were times when he considered killing himself, and needed to escape his situation.

Table 12A: Reason for Move to Toronto

REASONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Brought By Parents	8	10%
Came With Significant Other	3	4%
Educational	7	8%
Fleeing Dangerous Environment	5	6%
Health Related	2	2%
Moved Because Of CAS / Adoption	5	6%
Seeking A New Start	15	18%
Seeking Employment	24	29%
Seeking Other Two-Spirited People	1	1%

REASONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Seeking Out Family	7	8%
Wanted To Experience Big City Life	7	8%
Total	84	100%

The most frequently mentioned reasons for moving to Toronto to find employment (29%) and to seek a new start (18%). The former reason is the most common reason for Aboriginal people in general to move to the city. The relative lack of coming to the city for educational reasons (8%), which tends to be the second most frequent reason for Aboriginal people to move, is a reflection of the low levels of education (66% having high school or less) that characterize Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto.

12.4 Reasons for Being Homeless

I am homeless because I want to stay with my friends.

I am only like this, this week, not always.

I was adopted and lost my tongue and became a city boy.

Participants identified a number of common causes and factors that have contributed to their current circumstances as homeless individuals. (Chart 12F) Consistently between men's and women's focus groups and among the interview participants, substance abuse and addiction problems were the major reasons people are now homeless (44%).

A few participants discussed their ongoing personal difficulties with alcoholism, and explained that this creates multi-faceted obstacles to finding employment and housing. It was explained that some homeless people and shelter services only allow individuals who are sober, and becomes difficult for people who are suffering from substance abuse and need somewhere to stay first so they can address these problems. There are places for people to go for detoxification services, but the same challenges exist in accessing these services in terms of transportation, as well as long wait lists, and cuts to funding resulting

subsequent reductions in services. Participants also explained that one of the largest personal challenges is abusing substances as a result of a sense of discouragement because of their situation, and thus admitting to having a problem becomes one of the largest hurdles to overcome. A number of people also agreed that there are some very positive and supportive individuals working at treatment centres.

Both my grandparents on my mother's side stayed in residential schools...I still face the inter-generational traumas of my mother's upbringing. So I suffer alcoholism, it's a major problem in the family...so it's housing and getting off the booze really, so that's what has kept me down for the last 10 years...there are lots of guys that are getting kicked out of places for using, and then there's no place for guys like that to stay. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Respondents reported that substance abuse was the primary cause of their current situation of being homeless. Furthermore, 6% of interview participants said that battling addictions is one of the biggest problems they face as a homeless person in Toronto. Similarly, forty-four (44%) of interview respondents felt that battling addictions is a primary cause of other Aboriginal people's homelessness in Toronto (Chart 12F). This was indicated by one of the respondents:

Just the fact that I see friends and Elders drinking every day is sad. I don't know how they do it. (Homelessness Focus Group)

The majority of respondents in a women's focus group all agreed that dealing with and facing, addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling) is a key factor with the majority of homeless Aboriginal women in this city. Recurring health issues, along with the shame and doubt felt by many women around these routinely lead to a fear of disclosure and very often result in individuals deciding to forgo seeking the care necessary for good health. One participant explained:

My sisters have gambling issues. It is more acceptable to gamble now that there are casinos on reserves. People think gambling is okay now so you can't really get help for it. (Homelessness Focus Group)

A second factor contributing to homelessness, identified by 18% of interview participants and discussed in depth in focus groups, is the difficulty in being able to find and afford housing. Similarly, finding shelter and staying warm were named by 15% and 6% of interview

participants, respectively, as being the biggest problems faced by homeless people in Toronto (Chart 12G). In a men's focus group, it became clear that housing also related directly to employment. Participants explained that these two issues either support or perpetuate another; without housing it becomes difficult to obtain employment and without employment it isn't possible to obtain personal housing. One participant explained:

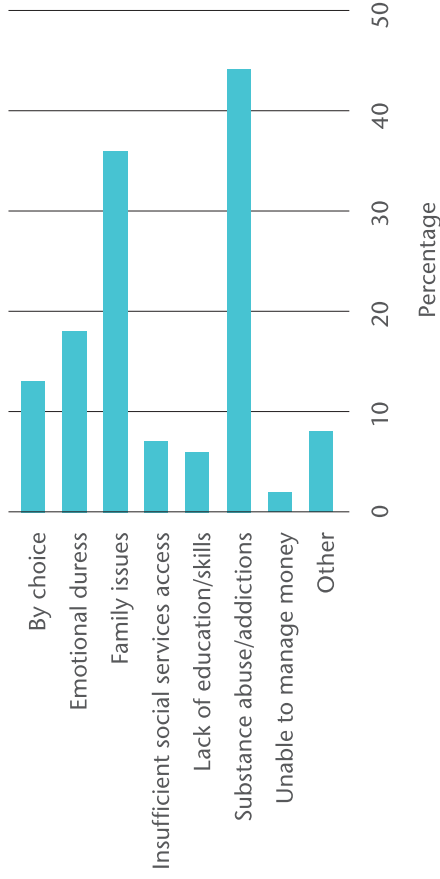
Without work or housing...which comes first, housing or work? And then, taking on both at the same time is twice as challenging. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Participants in a women's focus group explained that when suitable accommodation is found through government or private agencies there are most certainly quite lengthy waiting lists, regardless of individual's needs. As well, the majority of respondents have encountered some form of racism from many landlords during the inquest for housing. Racism does not stop with the landlords, however, and has been encountered through contact with neighbours and commercial outlets as well.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of interview participants also stated family issues were a major reason they are now homeless (Chart 12H). Some participants explained that they were adopted at a young age; others pointed to addiction problems in their family; an interview participant stated that, "mom died and there was no place to go"; a participant in a focus group discussed the intergenerational effects as a result of his grandparents having attended residential schools.

It was made clear by participants that the factors that have contributed to, and maintains, current situations of homelessness are not often interconnected and related. Rather than one isolated event or factor keeping people homeless, it is the interaction of issues such as housing, employment, transportation and health issues, as well as many others, which make it difficult for people to make needed changes to improve their circumstances. Therefore, participants explained that when trying to identify causes and solutions to Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto, it is important to remember the issues are related and must be addressed simultaneously.

CHART 12F: Reasons For Homelessness (Homeless Interviews n=201)



12.5 Major Factors Preventing Change

12.5.1 Transportation

Transportation was consistently highlighted by interview and focus group participants as one of the biggest challenges to homeless individuals in terms of the needs of daily life and long term limiting factors to being able to change their living, employment and economic situations. Specifically, men’s focus group participants explained that the cost of public transportation prevents people in their situation from being able to effectively move throughout the city; however, all of the options available to homeless or street individuals to change their situation, such as securing employment or housing, require the availability of transportation.

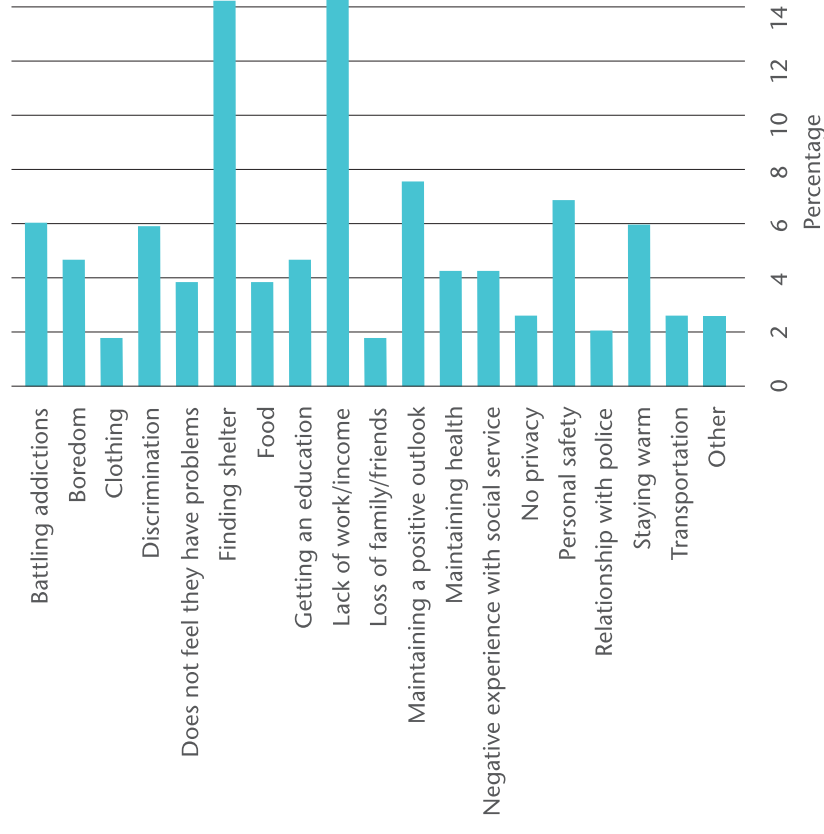
The need for affordable and reliable transportation was emphasized as one of the most fundamental and prohibitive factors in maintaining participants’ current situations. The obstacles to transportation were foundational to the other themes discussed in depth by participants. In addition to the cost of public transportation, the need to move throughout the city is time consuming and can present a challenge in accessing the various services that are needed, such as employment, social assistance, education and acquiring identification or clothing. Participants explained that they are given \$30 weekly for

transportation (it was noted that five transit tokens cost \$12.50), but required to pay this back, which becomes impossible when they are unable to find employment, or if the cost of transportation outweighs benefits of finding employment. One participant described the compound problem between employment and transportation, saying:

It’s hard to find work. Transportation is a big issue. I’m starting to reach outside of Toronto area now just to look for work and now it’s double bus fare, and I can’t have the funds to get around like that. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Among interview respondents, only 3% of people identified transportation as one of the biggest problems faced by homeless people (CHART 12G). In the context of comments from focus group participants however, the issue of transportation was seen as a major issue.

CHART 12G: Problems Faced Being Homeless (Homeless Interviews n=201)



The two most frequently identified problems articulated by interview respondents, lack of work/income (16%) and finding shelter (15%), are directly related to the issue of transportation needs. For instance, one man in a focus group explained that the biggest obstacle in obtaining both housing and employment is:

Doing all this foot work. Walking around, no transportation, I'm not working right now. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Transportation was also a key factor for the respondents in a women's focus group. They discussed the difficulty in getting from one location to another to access any of the services they need. A large number of Aboriginal agencies are located in the downtown core of Toronto. The cost of transportation is seen as a huge factor in accessing these services. Not only is cost an issue, but the difficulty in navigating the city and the time involved frequently makes it difficult for individuals to access the necessary services and again often results in people missing appointments and then turning away from the services in general as a result of discouragement. One woman explained that even when being able to find work, transportation remains an obstacle, saying:

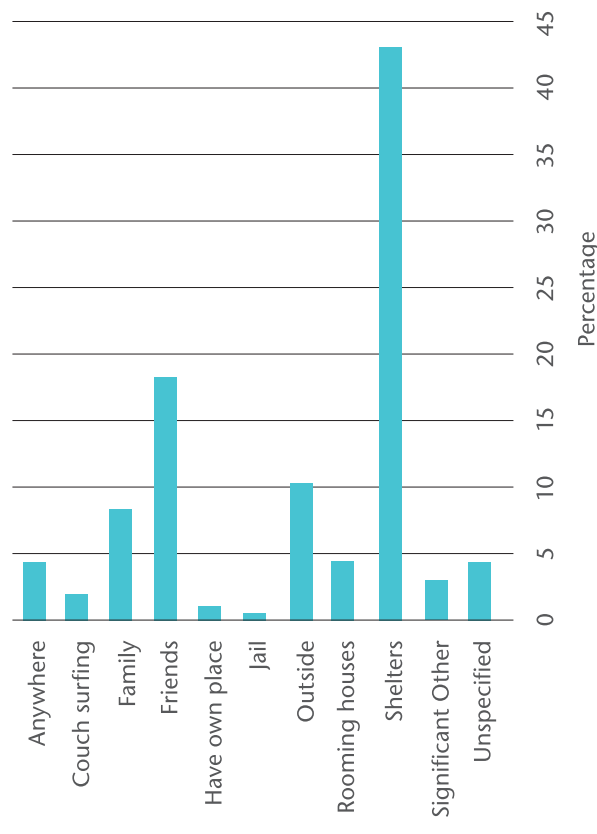
"I basically have to throw on, like, a big drama queen thing just to get two tokens from my worker. Then I have to kiss my workers ass just to get the extra \$100 for a bus pass" (Homelessness Focus Group).

12.5.2 Housing

There's guys who seriously need a place to put their life back in order; we don't have that. They're giving us a list of places where you can get anywhere and telling us we need to do the foot work, with no transportation fees, no nothing, and it's a terrible feeling being stuck. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Housing was determined to be one of the primary reasons leading to homelessness and one of the biggest problems faced by people upon becoming homeless, by both interview and focus group participants. Housing presents a significant challenge both in terms of being able to find and afford suitable housing situations. Participants in a men's focus group agreed that one of the most difficult parts about finding a place to live is being able to travel around the city looking for available places. Forty-three percent (43%) of interview respondents stated that they usually sleep in shelters (Chart 12H).

CHART 12H: Where Do You Usually Sleep? (Homeless Interviews n=202)



A number of participants in a focus group discussed the need for specific housing agency to help people staying in shelters, to assist with making the transition from a shelter to a self-sustainable living situation. Two focus group participants stated:

I honestly think that, some of the Native housing organizations that they have there, if they were geared more to, or have some kind of system in place for guys who are in Na-Me-Res or on the street, that would dedicate more time and effort into putting us into places that are more affordable. (Homelessness Focus Group)

[Native housing agencies] are not geared for us, they're geared for either working people or families. They should put some of their money they get to create a system that can help guys, not just leaving it for us, because a lot of guys don't have the skills to get out there and do that for themselves. (Homelessness Focus Group)

In terms of affording housing, participants expressed problems with being able to earn enough money to pay for rent, as well as the social stigmas that are encountered in trying to acquire housing as a homeless person or someone on social assistance. One of the main issues identified in a women's focus group with regards to housing is the cost

Low paying jobs or Ontario Works assistance rates are not adequate to enable people to afford decent accommodation. Many landlords will not accept tenants on Ontario Works and want to know employment history, salary figures and length of employment. References, credit checks and bank statements are a standard requirement to rent a dwelling and these are rarely available. One woman explained that:

They give you \$500 and that's it, not even enough to pay rent. Then when you go to see places, they want references, credit checks and everything. Even if you get a subsidized place, as soon as you get a job your rent goes up and you can't even get ahead a little bit. (Homelessness Focus Group)

A male focus group participant explained that it is difficult to obtain housing in situations where a room is available in someone's house, saying:

There's rooms everywhere, but coming out of a place like this, trying to get into a room, into somebody's house, it's pretty much impossible. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Expanding on the problem of encountering social stigma, another participant said that being on Ontario Works funding:

People look at that like it's not a guaranteed money thing, they just look at you different. (Homelessness Focus Group)

The challenges presented by housing made it clear that this is a multi-faceted issue complicated by a number of factors, including transportation, cost, employment and social perceptions of Aboriginal homeless people. There was also a significant amount of discussion surrounding the housing agencies and services in place to assist homeless individuals.

The issue of access to communication was discussed in relation to both housing and employment. Participants in the men's focus group explained that lack of telephone and Internet capabilities makes it challenging to contact potential housing and employment opportunities, or to provide people with a way to contact them. One individual suggested that there be a program to provide:

More funding for cell phones, computer access. If there was a credit program where you could get money for a phone and start up costs for a bus pass [other

participants agree] or something like that. They don't have computer access here but there's computer access across town, and it's getting across town, and how does your week really look, and how much time are you really spending doing whatever you really need. But having a phone helps, and it helps for getting a place too because people could call you back. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Other participants agreed with this. Participants said that the library is available for homeless people to use the Internet, but this is an unlimited or consistently reliable option as it is a public place and is only available during certain hours. As with many of the other themes discussed, access to communication is complicated by transportation factor.

I have applied to places like Wigwamen, but you go on the waiting list there too, which is understandable, but I'm talking more like, they've even got rooming houses out there, some of the Native housing places have rooming houses, well they should be geared and catering to guys who are in places like this, to get them in there. Because I'm a firm believer that if you don't have a roof over your head...you do have a base to work from, nothing gets done, right? (Homelessness Focus Group)

12.5.3 Employment

Employment is tied closely to the challenges involved in finding adequate housing, and as mentioned above, is compounded by an underlying problem of transportation faced by homeless individuals. Participants stated clearly that employment and housing create a situation where neither can be solved before the other, yet if one could be addressed sufficiently, it would support the improvement of the other.

In the men's focus group, participants generally agreed that many homeless individuals already have skills necessary for jobs, but are unable to secure reliable and lasting employment. Most of the participants in this focus group explained that they have worked in labour and construction industries, but as a result of other difficulties such as transportation and acquiring the necessary equipment for clothing for work, that, despite the fact that they are quite qualified, are not able to keep jobs. In terms of the difficulties in moving around the city looking for work, one focus group participant explained:

It's hard to find work. Transportation is a big issue. I'm starting to reach outside of Toronto now just to look for work and now its double bus fare, and I don't have the funds to get around like that. (Men's Focus Group)

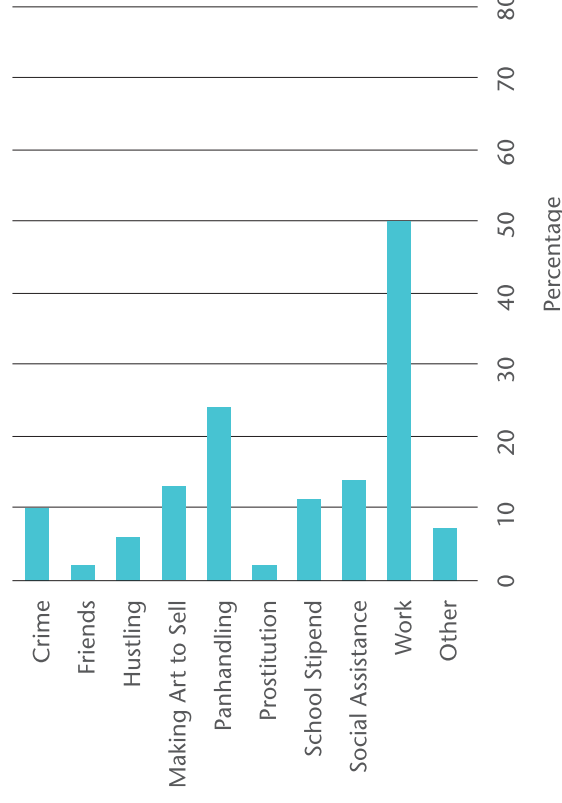
Not only is the cost and accessibility of transportation a challenge, but also the availability of work within the city. More than one participant agreed with this assessment that it is becoming increasingly necessary to travel outside of the city to work. Another participant in the same focus group felt that if someone is motivated enough, they can access the services and get assistance, where others felt there were still too many obstacles, and that discouragement becomes a big problem. He suggested:

I think there's available training for pretty much anybody that wants it, but you know, accessing it...maybe sometimes places like Na-Me-Res make it too easy for people not to want to go and work. (Men's Focus Group)

In spite of the difficulties, participants expressed a strong desire to find work, with 15% of interview participants saying that their typical day is spent either going to, or looking for, work. While finding and maintaining employment is difficult, 76% of interview participants stated that they are able to earn money as a homeless person, often from multiple sources. Fifty percent (50%) of these individuals said that they earn money by working, with 24% stating money is earned by panhandling and only 14% earning their money from social assistance (Chart 121). Over 8% of those individuals who are able to earn money reported a total family income of \$10,000 or less annually. It is clear that lack of money is a defining problem for Aboriginal people.

At the same time, reliance on various sources of social assistance is a big problem. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the respondents are currently receiving social assistance with a large percentage receiving it for a long time (28% for 5 years or more and 49% for 1 to 5 years).

CHART 121: Earning Money (Homeless Interviews n=173)



Individuals who said that they are able to earn money described as a tenuous and often unpredictable situation, using unreliable posting sites and temp agencies to locate work opportunities; however, it was also explained that some of these services appear to have been cut or are otherwise no longer available. One participant described one system that many of the other men in the focus group also utilized, saying:

They used to have a chalk board there in the morning, and people would call at night and put jobs up on the chalk board and we'd put our names down, and then a guy would come by and pick us up in the morning and [Na-Me-Res] would give us a token to come back, and we'd have to pay that token back...it would be roofing, whatever. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Participants generally agreed that many of these job posting sites have been removed or are no longer taking calls from employers to post workers. This is described by another participant:

There are temp agencies. There are more temp agencies now that you're guaranteed work from but they take half your money or something.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

One of the biggest challenges for people in finding and maintaining consistent work is being able to purchase the clothing and equipment needed for jobs, especially in construction where safety clothing is required. Safety clothing is particularly difficult because it is expensive to purchase and clothing agencies seldom have this type of clothing to provide for people. One respondent describes this situation:

A lot of guys go to work, and I think the majority of guys here work construction so it's having access to steel toe boots. Some of the agencies in the city provide those things. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Accessing clothing assistance is also made difficult by the challenges presented by a lack of affordable transportation options for homeless individuals. Even when services and assistance are available:

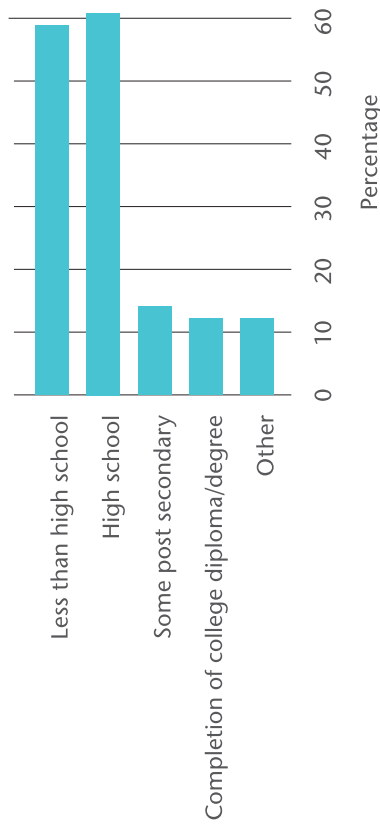
Then again it boils down to transportation, so if I have to get to another place, such as Scott's Mission, let's say, I have no way there, no way back.
(Homelessness Focus Group)

In other cases, one participant described a place that used to offer shoes, winter coats, and other clothing, that has stopped providing this service.

12.5.4 Education

Discussions around education focused largely on the need to upgrade education levels in order to access better employment opportunities, and often centered on the development of job training and skill development programs. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of interview respondents have not obtained a high school diploma (Chart 12J). Focus group participants explained that they actively seek opportunities to upgrade education or acquire more specific training. There are services within the city to take the GED test and complete high school, but participants said that accessing these services is a challenge due to transportation.

CHART 12j: Level of Education (Homeless Interviews n=158)



Discussions around job training and skill development revealed accessing these services can be difficult as well because there are requirements that people must complete before being able to additional training. One participant explained:

You see, with the training, you have to have an education level in order to get those trainings. (Homelessness Focus Group)

This made a number of people feel that they are somewhat trapped in their situations, needing to upgrade education levels in order to access employment opportunities, but not being able to reach the services to upgrade education due to cost or transportation difficulties. In addition, participants said that waiting lists for training programs are long, but that when accepted, there are training allowances that can be accessed to help with the cost of the programs.

12.5.5 Substance Abuse/Detoxification Facilities

The majority of interview and focus group participants agreed dealing with addictions is a key contributing factor with homeless Aboriginal people in Toronto. The difficulty in complying with unrealistic entrance requirements of detoxification and rehabilitation centres serves as a deterrent rather than a pragmatic source of assistance. Participants in both the men's and women's focus groups

expressed a great deal of discouragement with these facilities, explaining that it can be difficult to be accepted into detoxification programs if someone is still abusing drugs or alcohol, and once accepted, people felt that they could be kicked out quickly if mistakes are made.

The need for, and importance of, these facilities was underscored by the vast majority of participants, but they also felt that it can be so difficult to comply with the rules and requirements of the services that, for many people, they are unable to effectively utilize and access them. One woman shared her perceptions of the facilities available, saying:

The waiting list is forever. You got to be sober for four days before you can get in to some places. Then if you are on medication or anti-depressants they won't let you take it. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Participants described a variety of opinions about their experiences with some of the substance abuse facilities in the city. One participant recalled his experiences with the Pedahbun Lodge, saying:

I went through that...it was like, they made you sicker. And you know what, if you didn't follow their rules, you were done. (Homelessness Focus Group)

This feeling was shared by other participants as well, who agreed that at times they felt that detoxification facilities actually worsened some of their addiction problems. Being able to admit to suffering from addictions was a problem that participants in both focus groups identified as a significant obstacle to accessing help, and apprehension over entering facilities prevents others from healing. One woman explained:

Some people who come to Toronto and carry a shame because of their family and do not consider going for that help because there is alcoholism or drug abuse within their family and they do not want to disclose to anyone new. They stay on the street and get worse. (Homelessness Focus Group)

More than one participant in the men's focus group mentioned that there are workers at detoxification centres who are positive and dedicated individuals, going out of their way to help people. One man described the difference between the services in general and his experiences with the people who work at these facilities, saying that:

The employees go out of their way to help somebody get there. It's not really P.P.P. of the program with any of the agencies, but there are some solid people in there. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Participants in both the men's and women's focus groups felt strongly that there is a need for a specific Aboriginal addictions service detoxification centre in Toronto. One respondent discussed the frustration around rehabilitation services outside of the city:

If you're trying to access detox, it takes you maybe two days to get in...and then detox going into treatment programs, a lot of them are outside the city. And then any of the ones outside the city, you have to wait a month or 21 days or more. (Homelessness Focus Group)

According to participants in the women's focus group, the centre that offers Aboriginal in-patient healing and care is CAA Aboriginal Services. The focus here is felt to be more on group counselling and not enough focus on individual counselling. Respondents also felt that there is no facility with properly trained personnel who can properly assess the unique cultural, spiritual and individual needs of Aboriginal people. A participant in the women's focus group elaborated on the need for an Aboriginal detoxification centre, saying:

When you're ready to stop drinking and drugging there's no place to go. There are a lot of places that have the capacity to properly assess us as Aboriginal people so they don't know where to put you or what you need. My needs and her needs can be quite different. There is also more need for individual counselling. Most of the places focus on groups and group counselling and not enough on me. I need more support for me, not for the group. (Homelessness Focus Group)

The need for an Aboriginal detox facility was also identified in a report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force (1999), commissioned by the City of Toronto. Substance abuse problems form a strong underlying issue in many of the areas of discussion touched upon in focus groups, including the cause of homelessness, one of the ongoing challenges in daily life, and in accessing appropriate effective services. Participants felt that this is a crucial issue to address.

12.5.6 Two-Spirited Services

Often the situation for street involved two-spirited individuals is particularly difficult, particularly transgendered people (See Chapter 8). One transgendered respondent spoke of certain streets in downtown Toronto that bound her world beyond which she dare not go for fear of harassment and even violence. And while there is a significant two-spirited Aboriginal community in Toronto, homophobia and lack of services for homeless people from this particular group remains a problem.

One participant explained that there are few services specifically for street involved two-spirited individuals, although 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations provided programs and services to two-spirited people, especially those who are HIV positive. It was discussed that there was money allocated and spent on kitchen facilities at the 2-Spirited organization, and that there used to be meals served and movies shown in the evenings, but that these programs do not exist anymore and two-spirited women now have no access to food-related assistance; the facilities sit empty, and the perception is that funds that should be spent on these services are spent on other activities. One participant explained that money is spent on travel expenses for people to speak about homeless issues, but that the services in the city suffer as a result.

12.5.7 Accessing Services

A great deal of the discussion during the focus groups focused on the services that exist for homeless Aboriginal people in Toronto, but are difficult to access for a variety of reasons, some of which have already been discussed. It was clear that the three main issues in accessing services were: 1) availability, including the problem that participants have seen a number of services reduced or cut in recent years; 2) the physical ability to access services and facilities, which is made difficult due to transportation challenges and inadequate spaces available for high numbers of people needing assistance; and, 3) concerns about the treatment of people by agency staff.

The majority of the focus group participants has either used social services or assistance at some point in their lives, or would like to be able to gain better access to these opportunities. The most common services mentioned by focus group participants were shelters, employment, housing, education and addiction services.

When asked what types of things are helpful to them as homeless individuals, by far the most common response was social service agencies (mentioned by 41%) followed by friends and family (19%) positive thinking (10%).

When asked to distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social service agencies, there appeared to be a slight preference for Aboriginal agencies among interview respondents. Seventy-four percent (74%) of interview respondents had been assisted by an Aboriginal support service agency compared to 60% by a non-Aboriginal agency. The most commonly mentioned Aboriginal agencies that have helped were Na-Me-Res (22%), Council Fire (21%), Anishnawbe Health (11%), Native Child and Family Services (10%), Native Women's Resource Centre (10%), Miziwe Biik (9%), Native Canadian Centre (7%), Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (6%). These Aboriginal organizations helped respondents in a variety of ways including providing shelter (16%), food (15%), education and training (13%), medical services (11%) and counselling (7%). The vast majority of respondents (81%) are satisfied with the support they received from Aboriginal agencies.

There was also significant satisfaction with the assistance received from non-Aboriginal support agencies, with 82% reporting that they had no problems with such agencies. By far the most common user of non-Aboriginal agencies related to drop-in centres (29%) and shelters (27%), with social service agencies being the only other agency utilized by 15% of respondents. When asked how the non-Aboriginal agencies assisted them, two answers were by far the most common: food (21%) and shelter (16%).

Respondents were asked whether they preferred accessing Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal service agencies. Forty-two percent (42%) stated they preferred Aboriginal agencies, 8% non-Aboriginal agencies and 50% had no preference. When asked why they preferred Aboriginal agencies the most common responses related to cultural reasons, with 36% stating because they felt more supported and understood at Aboriginal organizations, 34% because of the cultural connection and 22% because of a sense of community. The provision of culturally-based services appears to be an important factor in meeting the needs of Aboriginal homeless people.

In terms of the availability of programs and services, a number of participants in the focus groups expressed frustration over reductions in the number of services and in the frequency of programs offered, and cuts in funding for assistance opportunities:

There's a few services out there, but not as many as before. (Homelessness Focus Group)

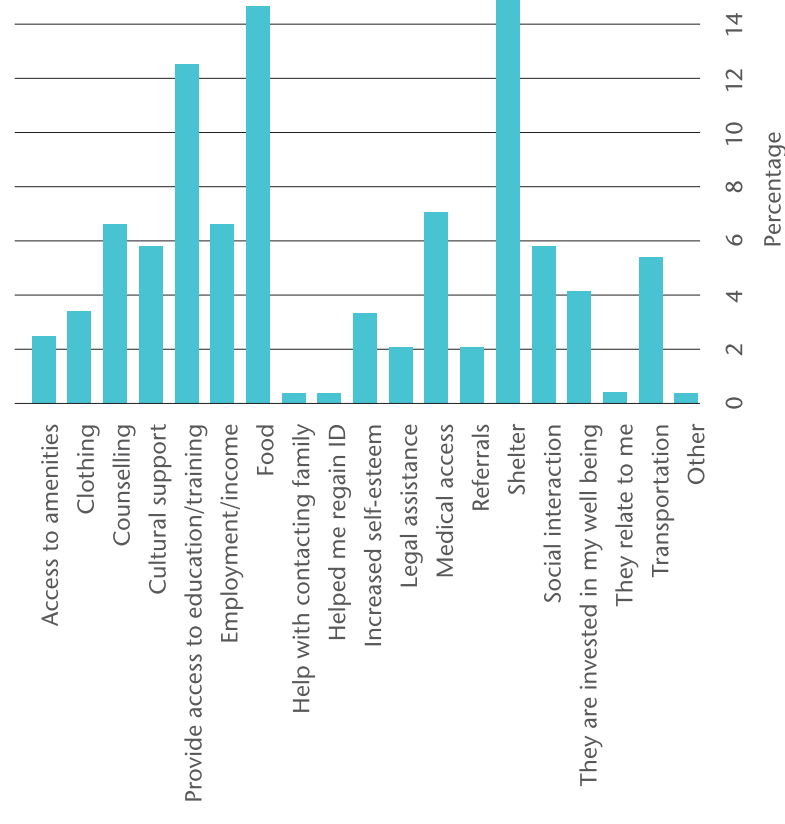
There was a discussion during the focus groups about clothing services that are no longer available. One participant described a place that used to offer shoes, winter coats and other clothing that has stopped offering this service. Another participant explained his experiences with services being cancelled, saying:

Na-Me-Res had everything...all of a sudden it's just gone. When I first came through the doors, they had tokens...anything to do with medical, or jobs, now they don't have that. And now you borrow tokens and you have to pay them back. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Participants also felt that there were service gaps for medical and dental coverage for homeless people. In another example, participants explained that in order to find employment, they need personal identification, and this service has been reduced:

We used to have a woman come down here, once a week, and do your I.D. free. Now you have to go all the way up town to go get it. (Homelessness Focus Group)

CHART 12K: How Have Aboriginal Services Helped (Homeless Interviews n=23)



Transportation was mentioned by focus group participants as probably the biggest obstacle to accessing services that may be available. Similarly, distance was also seen as a challenge, notwithstanding access to affordable transportation, as participants explained that many services for housing, employment, treatment centres and others are centralized and sometimes located outside the core of the city. The need to travel to places to access services is time consuming and expensive.

A number of participants in the focus groups expressed concern with negative treatment by two non-Aboriginal service agencies. The women felt that staff at these centres held negative perceptions

of Aboriginal women and that racism was frequently experienced by Aboriginal clients. On the other hand, participants in both focus groups described positive experiences with Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto. One participant provided the following reflection:

Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto is another place that always helps me. I go there a lot for all my legal issues and they are always there for me. (Homelessness Focus Group)

12.5.8 Racism and Lateral Violence

A significant number of respondents stated that racism against Aboriginal people in Toronto was a problem, with 43% suggesting it was an issue and 39% saying it was not a problem. Furthermore, 48% of respondents had personally experienced racism in Toronto, compared to 41% who had not. The most common place where racism was expressed was by the police, court system or security guards (27%) with on the street (17%) and in businesses (13%) being the other most frequently mentioned places.

Interestingly, nearly one-third of respondents (30%) suggested that there were incidents of discrimination against Aboriginal people by other Aboriginal people in Toronto, primarily in terms of being made to feel inferior (33%) and physical violence (26%). The presence of racism and lateral violence on the streets of Toronto, especially by the police, can only compound the already difficult circumstances Aboriginal homeless people have to cope with.

12.6 Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the data points to several important characteristics of the situation of Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto that should be taken into consideration in any effort to more effectively meet their needs. Many are experiencing 'multiple problems' including addictions, mental health problems, lack of education, racism and physical health issues that are all inter-related. For example, an individual might have diabetes, FASD, high blood pressure and be HIV positive while at the same time be depressed or has ADD as well as an addiction

to alcohol. And living on the street, with its inherent risks and cultural circumstances, compounds the challenges. Often, after a period of time, individuals get into a 'homeless mentality' whereby they perceive of themselves as in a hopeless and powerless situation. The internal negative image is often reinforced by relations with non-street involved people who often treat homeless people as 'invisible', inferior or worse. Relations with police and courts are often negatively perceived. Racism and lateral violence are also often problems.

At the same time, frequently, a sense of community exists among homeless people and they appreciate the services and assistance they receive from social service agencies. Some, with support, are able to get their lives together and transition off the street to more stable circumstances.

On the other hand, the situation of many homeless Aboriginal people results in a downward spiral that is very difficult to get out of. They become stuck in a vicious circle of not being able to 'succeed' in society's terms. Initially when they come to the city, they may not be able to adjust because of a lack of education and experience, bad luck, lack of support, racism or understanding of city life. Unable to establish economic stability or satisfactory housing and with few supports they end up in some form of homeless situation. Over time, other issues such as racism or negative experiences make the situation worse leading to an internalization of the inferior image attributed to them with a loss of sense of being able to extract themselves out of their circumstances.

In this process, respondents spoke of a kind of self-consciousness that they are consistently aware of in their life on the streets. In living their daily life, they often feel stress because they must be careful how they behave or they will put themselves at risk. For example, a respondent said that he always obeys the law when in public for fear the police will have any excuse to single him out and arrest or harass him. Even the most mundane daily tasks that the average person takes for granted can be challenges for homeless people. The following quote is an example:

When I cross the street, I always cross at the corner and obey the signals. I always wait for the little white man to let me know when I can cross, even if my friend is crossing against the light. (Homelessness Focus Group)

Finally, respondents were asked a question relating to advice that they would give to other Aboriginal people who are on the streets that would assist them. The two most common responses were, give words of encouragement (35%) and give words of warning (27%) followed by the desire for more services (19%) and the need for higher levels of education (12%). Many suggested that if they were perceived by members of the mainstream society, particularly social service agencies, in a more positive fashion (as opposed to as 'problems') their sense of self-worth and motivation to get off the streets would improve.

Several themes emerged from the data that are important to address if the situation of Aboriginal homeless people is to be improved.

12.6.1 Substance Abuse

A number of participants discussed their experiences with substance abuse and the challenges they have as Aboriginal and homeless individuals in accessing assistance and treatment. A few participants discussed their ongoing personal difficulties with alcoholism, and explained that this creates multi-faceted obstacles in finding employment and housing. It was explained that some housing and shelter services only allow individuals who are sober, and this becomes difficult for people who are suffering from substance abuse and need a place to stay first so they can address these problems. There are places for people to go for detoxification services, but challenges exist in accessing these services in terms of transportation, long wait lists and cuts to funding resulting in subsequent reductions in services. Participants also explained that one of the most difficult personal challenges is abusing substances as a result of a sense of discouragement because of their situation, and thus admitting to having a problem becomes one of the largest hurdles to overcome. Participants also emphatically agreed that there is a need for an Aboriginal detox centre in the city that is capable of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by homeless Aboriginal people.

In the past, there was an Aboriginal addictions treatment centre in Toronto which closed because of administrative and financial issues. It is clear that such an agency is vital for the healing of homeless Aboriginal people.

12.6.2 Transportation

The need for affordable and reliable transportation was emphasized as one of the most fundamental and prohibitive factors in preventing people from being able to change their living, employment and economic situations. Specifically, participants explained that the need for public transportation prevents people in their situation from being able to effectively move throughout the city; however, all of the options available to homeless or street individuals to change their situation such as securing employment or housing, require the availability of transportation. The obstacles to transportation were foundational to the other themes discussed in depth by participants. In addition to the cost of public transportation, the need to move throughout the city is time consuming and can present a challenge in accessing various services that are needed, such as employment, education and acquiring identification or clothing.

12.6.3 Employment/Housing

Participants consistently identified the need for employment and housing as fundamental to something that is needed for them to have a more stable and self-sufficient situation. There was clear expression of a personal desire among participants to work, and earning money is one of the most basic factors needed to allow participants to become self-sufficient. Employment and housing overlapped with many of the other themes discussed by participants, including transportation, communication and access to services. Participants repeatedly expressed that without access to transportation and communication, finding employment or housing becomes virtually impossible. It is clear that, in addition to a lack of skills preventing people from working, it is the physical ability to travel to a job, acquire the clothing and equipment needed for particular jobs, and finding services that will help with additional training or job searching. Employment related directly to the theme of housing. Participants explained that these two issues either support or perpetuate one another; without stable housing situation it becomes difficult to obtain employment and without employment it isn't possible to obtain personal housing.

Chapter 13

ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN TORONTO

Participants highlighted communication as a central theme and obstacle to being able to improve their situations, specifically in relation to employment and housing. Participants expressed that without access to consistent telephone communication especially, it becomes very difficult to find employment as people cannot make or receive calls to or from potential employers. The same statement was made with regards to finding housing; without a way to communicate with renters or landlords, opportunities to acquire housing are missed. Internet communication was also considered vital, but this is somewhat more accessible through public libraries; however, participants still maintained that they need more readily available and guaranteed access to Internet to secure employment and housing. In addition, the themes of transportation and communication compound one another, in the sense that to access Internet, people must travel to public libraries, and this can cost money. Similarly, without access to a phone, people must physically travel to seek employment or housing, and once again this can be prohibitively expensive.

12.6.4 Access to Services

The theme of accessing services was an overarching discussion topic throughout the focus groups. Transportation was mentioned as probably the biggest obstacle to accessing services that may be available. Similarly, distance was also seen as a challenge, notwithstanding access to affordable transportation, as participants explained that many services for housing, employment, treatment centres and others are too centralized and sometimes located outside the core of the city. The need to travel to places to access services is time consuming and expensive. In addition, it was discussed that many services have been cancelled, such as employment and transportation services. Participants also explained that long wait lists are an issue and that Aboriginal people are often on the bottom of the list for services.

It reinforces who we are as people... that we are a proud people and we have customs and traditions; a way of life that is unique and makes us who we are. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- The predominant Aboriginal groups in Toronto are Anishnawbe, followed by Haudenosaunee, Métis and Cree.
- The overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people in Toronto are unable to converse in an Aboriginal language.
- Aboriginal cultural activities are important to a vast majority of Aboriginal people and there is a strong desire for additional cultural, recreational and spiritual services.
- Aboriginal culture needs to be more accessible for community members and there is a strong desire for an Aboriginal cultural centre.

Expressions of Aboriginal cultures and identities are complex, dynamic, and related to factors such as treaties, land displacement, the Indian Act, physical appearance, language, and spiritual/cultural practices. For Aboriginal people living in Toronto, the urban centre can become “the setting where the most extreme levels of dislocation exists among its Aboriginal population and the site where Native people as a whole are the most invisible”.¹⁴³ Aboriginal identity within an urban context is even more bound with contention where multiple Aboriginal groups meet that have different languages and cultures.

143 Lawrence, B. (2004). “Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. p. 19.

Aboriginal identity was also reflected in the 2010 Environics Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. This study found that:

...language, and Aboriginal customs and traditions are the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to be passed on to future generations, and also rank Aboriginal ceremonies and spirituality as more important compared to others. This research also showed that respondents were concerned about the loss of their cultural identity in the Toronto Aboriginal community.¹⁴⁴

Lawrence (2004) has written extensively about this, specifically within the Toronto Aboriginal community context.¹⁴⁵ As she describes, “urban native people living in large cities such as Toronto must daily negotiate an environment in which Nativeness is marginalized, and yet the dominant culture is heavily invested in an image of itself as race-neutral.”¹⁴⁶ Marginalization of Aboriginal culture is compounded by the multi-cultural environment of the City of Toronto.

Identity for Aboriginal people takes on a much different form than for ethnic groups in Canada because of the intersection of policy, race and resources relating to their unique Indigenous status and cultures.¹⁴⁷ Berry (1999) describes various components of a positive and negative cultural identity for Aboriginal people. A positive Aboriginal identity consists of several features including “perception of oneself as Aboriginal, wanting to remain an Aboriginal person, and expressing these in one’s daily behaviour.”¹⁴⁸ He also describes aspects of a negative Aboriginal identity which include not perceiving oneself as Aboriginal, or not considering it to be important, not wanting to maintain this identity, nor expressing it in daily life. One respondent describes this negative part of Aboriginal identity:

I didn't choose not to speak my language and I didn't choose to be abused in my upbringing and so on...these are the negative parts of being Aboriginal. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

144 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Ottawa: Environics.

145 Lawrence, B. (2004). “Real” Indians and Others: *Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p 19.

146 Lawrence, B. (2004). “Real” Indians and Others: *Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

147 The reference to ethnic groups in Toronto is in no way suggesting that Aboriginal people are an ethnic group. Aboriginal people, as the first peoples of Canada, represent a people with a special legal status and place in Canadian society.

148 Berry, J.W. (1999). Aboriginal Cultural Identity. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XIX (1), 1-36.

Berry (1999) also describes a “consolidated cultural identity” as including some consistency between these components, whether negative or positive.¹⁴⁹ This chapter will look at various issues identified around Aboriginal culture and identity both in the negative and positive sense as described by Berry (1999) through the TARP research. Specific topics include Aboriginal identity, language, adapting cultural practices to an urban environment and cultural and spiritual service Aboriginal organizations.

13.1 Aboriginal Identity

Identity is connected to concepts of self or how one seeks to self-identify. As Berry (1999) describes, there are two components to identify an individual or social distinction in which one would answer the question ‘who am I’ by saying something like ‘honest, hardworking’ or a social identity, whereby someone may describe themselves as ‘Canadian, Albertan, Cree’.¹⁵⁰ In an urban context, the social identity is important when trying to identify as a participating member of a specific Aboriginal community. For Aboriginal people, these nuances of social identity are an integral component of belonging to an Aboriginal community in Toronto. Three main sub-themes emerged out of the discussions around Aboriginal identity: the predominance of Anishnawbe culture or lack of Aboriginal diversity, mixed race authentic identity and urban/reserve disconnect.

13.1.1 Aboriginal Diversity

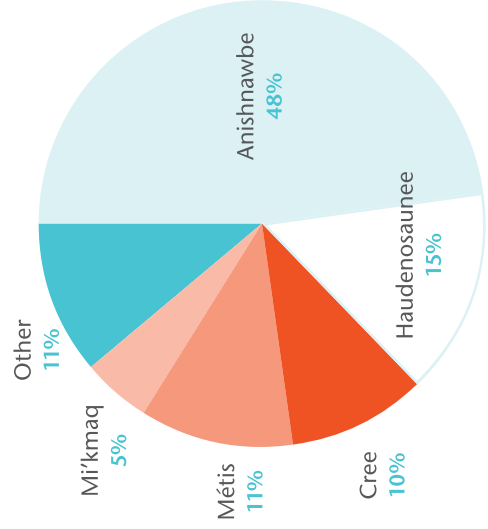
Aboriginal people are not one homogenous group. Aboriginal people including First Nation, Métis and Inuit people are ancestrally born from all parts of Canada and are comprised of multiple linguistic and cultural groups. While there is certainly many aspects of shared history, specifically a shared colonial history, there are vast distinctions amongst different Aboriginal cultural groups. Respondents were asked about their Aboriginal identity. Almost 50% of respondents indicated that they were Anishnawbe or Ojibway. Fifteen per

149 *Ibid*

150 *Ibid*

(15%) indicated that they were Haudenosaunee (i.e. Mohawk, Seneca, Tuscarora), 11% indicated that they were Métis and another 10% stated that they were Cree, as indicated in Chart 13A. These numbers are similar to those reported in the 2008 Aboriginal housing consultation report which noted that 47.8% of their respondents were Anishnawbe, 8% were Métis, 6.8% were Ojibwe, and 7.6% indicated that they were Haudenosaunee (i.e. Mohawk or Oneida).¹⁵¹

CHART 13A: Cultural Identity (Quantitative n= 482)



There were a high proportion of Anishnawbe respondents to the research. Forty-eight percent (48%) of survey respondents indicated that they were Anishnawbe. There was also discussion from interviews and focus groups which indicated that many of the cultural programming and organizations were geared towards Anishnawbe people. One respondent indicated this:

Even in Toronto, it is so Anishnawbe, even the Haudenosaunee people who are in this area too, they are overshadowed. Anishnawbe Health Toronto, it is so Ojibway, so I never really searched out an Elder in that way either. I was like "where's the Cree?" This isn't really for me. (Life History)

While the prevalence of Anishnawbe respondents may indicate there are many Anishnawbe people in Toronto, it may also indicate that those who are most connected to Aboriginal organizations in Toronto are Anishnawbe, and were therefore participating in research project. However, we can also look to the names of organizations such as Nishnawbe Homes and Anishnawbe Health to see Anishnawbe culture is an important and dominant component of Aboriginal organizations in Toronto.

When asked in the qualitative responses about the major issues concerning Aboriginal culture and identity, 5% of respondents indicated that there was a lack of Aboriginal cultural diversity. The dominance of the Anishnawbe people within Aboriginal organizations certainly speaks to this lack of diversity.

Aboriginal diversity is particularly interesting within an urban context for those who have spent the majority of their lives within an urban setting. One respondent describes some of the Aboriginal diversity in the Toronto Aboriginal community:

I notice that at these gatherings there is so much diversity there. I could see the faces there that don't always look Native. There are all kinds of Natives in Toronto (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

The term pan-Indianism is one that refers to two separate concepts. It is the trans-national movement of the 1960s which brought together native people from across North America in a common effort to bring attention to Indigenous issues and injustices. The term 'pan-Indian' is also used in reference to the tendencies of viewing all Indigenous people as one homogenous group sharing common cultural practices, language and customs instead of distinctive societies with equally distinctive language, cultural practices, histories, customs and dialects, including multiple dialects. Restoule (2008) describes research done with Aboriginal men in Toronto and the emergence of a pan-Indian identity. He describes the reasons for the migration to urban centres like Toronto as important, because of the initial discrimination with extended families and ancestral communities which in turn requires great effort to seek out traditions, teachings and community

¹⁵¹ Nishnawbe Homes, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training and Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre. (2008). *Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Housing Consultation: Final Report.*

He describes the by-product of this disconnection as a pan-Indian identity development amongst urban Indigenous people.¹⁵²

The notion of pan-Indianism or a dominance of one Aboriginal culture can become problematic for Aboriginal communities because it can result in divisiveness within the community. It can also spark feelings of inauthenticity or shame amongst Aboriginal people who may have spent most of their lives in an urban centre like Restoule's (2008) research participants, and not had a chance to engage intensely with their own Aboriginal culture specifically. For many Aboriginal people, the inaccessibility of their own traditions, cultural practices and extended families is out of reach and instead, they must rely on the pan-Indian culture that an urban centre can often provide.

Understanding Aboriginal identity and population rates is also complicated by the phenomenon of ethnic mobility. This term refers to the changing ethnic affiliation of families and individuals, and with Aboriginal groups we see ethnic mobility as a multidirectional phenomenon, composed of entries and exits that supply or tap the group. These changes impact the size and characteristics of those groups. Other terms used to describe ethnic mobility according to Guimond et. al.(2003) include: ethnic switching, changing identities, passing, and changes in self-reporting of ethnic identity.¹⁵³ FitzMaurice and McCaskill (2011) argue that the growth seen in urban Aboriginal populations over the last two decades are due in part to the phenomenon of ethnic mobility rather than net emigration from reserves or natural increases. The growth is also due to intergenerational ethnic mobility where for a variety of reasons, more Aboriginal people are choosing to self-identify as such than in previous generations. In addition, the children of mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal families are now acknowledging their identities at a later stage in their life.¹⁵⁴

Of course, much of this is related to the federal government's Aboriginal identity policy, specifically the Indian Act, as well as surging ethnic pride and economic mobility of Aboriginal people themselves. The phenomenon of intergenerational ethnic mobility as described by FitzMaurice and McCaskill (2011) and Guimond (2003) is evident in the following quote:

It is up to the parents of mixed kids to promote either their Irish side or promote their Aboriginal side because they don't know what to call themselves. So it goes back to their parents. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

13.1.2 Authentic and Mixed Identity

In many cases, living in the urban centre leads to marriages of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The children of these unions face their own unique set of circumstances in navigating their identity. Lawrie (2004) describes some of the anxiety facing mixed blood people: "For urban mixed-bloods have therefore had to contend, at some point in their lives, with the fact that they do not fit the models of what has been held up to them – by whites – as authentic Nativeness".¹⁵⁵ The notion of 'belonging' can become even more difficult in an urban context in Toronto where there is a diverse population of many different ethnic groups. Restoule's (2004) research determined that acceptance by an Aboriginal community, regardless of physical location was more important than blood quantum in terms of identity development.¹⁵⁶ The issue of belonging, connection and authenticity was raised by many respondents.

That's what I felt growing up. I wasn't really white, I wasn't really native. In the end it is like what is happening now in 2009. There were very few mixed marriages in the forties and fifties. My husband's family had a problem with me. It was very hurtful at the beginning. His father remarried after his wife passed away. (Life History)

I went from a place where everyone knew who I was, and how my identity was

Toronto: Oxford University Press.

155 Lawrence, B. (2004). "Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p 135.

156 Restoule, J.P. (2004). *Male Aboriginal Identity Formation in Urban Areas: A Focus on Process and Context*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Toronto.

152 Restoule, J.P. (2008). The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation Amongst the Urban Raised Generation. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(2) 15-34.

153 Guimond, E. (2003). Fuzzy Definitions and Population Explosion: Changing Identities of Aboriginal Groups in Canada. In D. Newhouse & E. Peters (Eds.) *Not Strangers in These Parts: Aboriginal People in Cities*. Ottawa: Policy Research Institute.

154 FitzMaurice, K., McCaskill, D. Urban Aboriginal People in Canada: Community Trends and Issues in Governance. In D. Long & O.P. Dickason (Eds.) *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*.

made up. And everybody knew I was half...half Cree, and everybody knew who my parents were. (Life History)

We have to look beyond that, people identify with that. It is important that we embrace that. Are they being accepted in the wider Aboriginal community? There needs to be more work done. We need to be more accepting, I suppose, in my opinion. Even myself I have some of my own biases. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

The concept of authenticity is highly nuanced and can become dependent upon a number of factors such as physical appearance, language and cultural knowledge, or possession of Indian status.

I think maybe because of the way that I grew up and seeing the things that make up a personal identity, like seeing my dad who was as white as you can get, like his skin tone was very white, and then seeing my mom who had brown skin, and seeing how that makes up me and my siblings very differently, that knowing where you come from is very important to me. (Life History)

There seems to be this idea that if you don't look Native then you are not Native. You have to have a look, or you have to go to the ceremonies. You have to be part of a clique. I know these Aboriginal people who are mixed. My five-year-old daughter is mixed. It sounds funny to label her like that. Labelling her like that because she is five and she is a real sweetheart, but I know that she has an old spirit. That is what I was told, and so I know that throughout my teachings I respect people...what is on the outside, I mean we are all different. I think that there is respect there that we have to remember. There is a kind of a negative feel there and I talked to a lot of people in the community and I know it's hard to speak up against it when they say, "I don't even think that guy is Native, I don't even think she's Native"...We have to go beyond it; that is the spirit of who we are as a human family. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

I am wondering why the words 'mixed race' is in quotes. For me it has the connotations that it means White and Native. They are a lot of mixed people who's other race is black. People have had time to find connectedness. There is time to take up a language class, going to ceremonies or taking up a traditional lifestyle. I'd like to think that the City of Toronto and Aboriginal community is receptive of the mixed races. I use to think like that too but I changed. I'd like to think that that is what has been happening for the last 20 years and through my own personal experience I think it has and I also think it is the parents' upbringing. It is up to the parents and society how to raise their children. If they are half-Native it is up to them whether they want to listen to that with their identity. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

For others, the issue of Indian status can be closely connected to degree to which they feel authentic. In some cases, having Indian status means access to specific programs targeted towards the Registered Indian population. In other cases, having Indian status means that is an opportunity to live in a First Nation community rather than an urban centre.

I think about being like non-status. I mean just the reasons that I can't get it, being non-status; it's a detriment to myself. My grandparents were soldiers and they gave up their status to fight for this county and they would have died for (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

For 30 years, I didn't know where I belonged and didn't know my biological father. My parents knew I was native but didn't know where I was from. In my thirties I met a Mohawk lady because I was friends with her kids. She sent off the form Ottawa and 11 months later I found out I was registered. I got my status card and saw what band I was from, so I decided to go up there snooping. (Life History)

The tensions around mixed race identity in the Toronto Aboriginal community are not unique to the urban setting. Due to the direct loss of Indian status to resources, mixed racial identity and the impending loss of Indian status has become a controversial topic across Aboriginal communities in Canada.¹⁵⁷

13.1.3 Urban/Reserve Connections

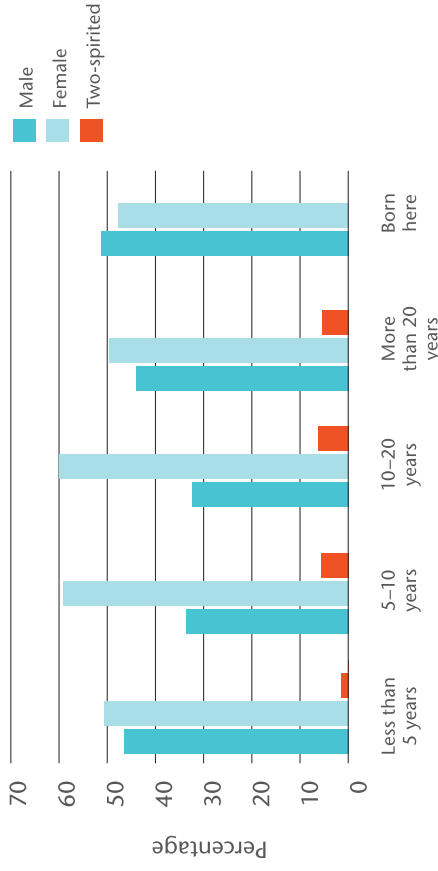
Restoule (2004) describes the connection between home reserve Toronto. For some of his research participants, the reserve was a place that their "ancestors lived and where their relations live now" which was regarded as distinct from the Toronto Aboriginal community. Many TARP respondents have lived in Toronto for many years. Some were born here, while others have come to the city in recent years. The surveys revealed that 42% have lived in Toronto for at least 10 years, 16.8% have lived here for the last 10 to 20 years, 18% have lived

157 For more information on the issues of Indian status, please refer to work done by Clatworthy including: *The Changing Demography of First Nations Populations: Impacts of the 1985 Indian Act Amendment to the Rules Governing Indian Registration*. Winnipeg: Four Directions Project Consultants, 2007.

158 Restoule, J.P. (2004). *Male Aboriginal Identity Formation in Urban Areas: A Focus on Process and Context*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Toronto.

here for five to 10 years, and 23.2% have lived here for less than five years. It is interesting to note that in the last five to 20 years, there have been a higher proportion of Aboriginal women who have arrived in Toronto. This may be due to increased opportunities for women in the city with increased education, or alternatively they could be fleeing negative circumstances in their home communities. This is not a new trend, and Howard-Bobiwash describes the influx of Aboriginal women in Toronto, particularly in the post WWII era as due to the transferability of skills to work in an urban environment.¹⁵⁹

CHART 13B: Length of Stay by Gender (Quantitative n=561)



The majority of respondents indicated that they still maintain links to their community of origin (69.5%). According to the survey data, respondents are returning home mainly to visit their family and friends (45%), to attend funerals or weddings (43%), for holidays (34%) or for cultural reasons (30%). Some respondents discussed some of the challenges of being disconnected from their First Nation community and some of the misunderstandings that can take place between people who have chosen (or in some cases were forced) to leave the community for an urban centre.

I just know from my own experience that when I go back to where I am from, people say that I am an urban Indian. None of that might be true, but there is a reason that I am up here, you know I choose to be who I am. I did in many aspects. I didn't choose not to speak my language, I didn't choose to be, you know, abused in my upbringing and so on. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

There is this link between the urban Aboriginal people and on reserve and off reserve people. I don't know if there is a conflict of understanding, because sometimes urban Aboriginal people have to go and connect with their home reserve to apply for funding, for training dollars, for education, for housing support, you know some kind of funding. Or to live in the city if there is some kind of crisis or something like that. We often think that the band or First Nation communities are responsible even though we live off reserve. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

The links between the First Nation communities and the urban community of Toronto is one that some organizations are attempting to foster by establishing more formal relationships. Council Fire, for example, makes efforts to involve First Nation communities in some of their programming and outreach. One respondent describes a type of outreach programming to reserves:

There is a lot of lateral violence in our community that has to be addressed and we need to be able to bridge the gap between urban and First Nation communities. I have had the opportunity when I worked at Council Fire. Some youth from the reserve would come and we would do presentations on our experiences working with Aboriginal homeless people and some of the violence and homicide that occurred within the city with our clients. We would talk to them about the reality of living in the city, so you know there are some good things that have happened there are some good things happening now. I think that for the most part we have to work of bridging that. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

First Nation communities are often the location for many cultural events and ceremonies, so as a result, many Aboriginal people contribute to reserves, even if they are not their home communities, to participate in such gatherings.

159 Bobiwash-Howard, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

13.2 Language

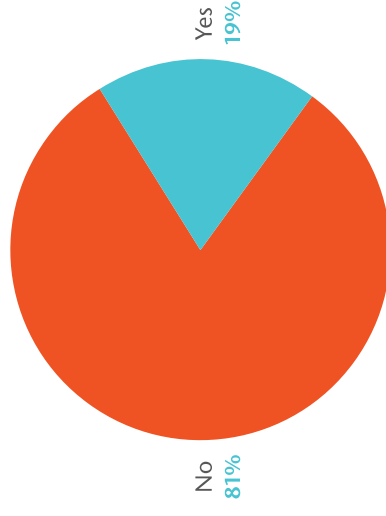
The loss of Aboriginal languages is a prevalent concern for many Aboriginal communities across Canada. Lawrence (2004) makes the connection between language and culture: “language shapes thought and custom, and therefore behaviour; knowing one’s Indigenous language is essential to a really strong grounding in one’s culture.”¹⁶⁰ Language is also closely connected to identity, and the ability to maintain fluency is compromised within an urban setting. As one respondent describes the tensions around language and identity:

One of the teachings, again, is around identity. You go to some reserves and they talk about identity being the language. You can go to a lot of those communities and they speak the language, but they don’t know the ceremonies. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

It is questionable to assume that language can be retained just by residing in Aboriginal communities. We do know that Aboriginal communities like First Nations reserves or Inuit villages can be “enclaves in supporting language transmission”, however without family support, community support is insufficient “to ensure the adequate transmission of an Aboriginal language as a population’s mother tongue from one generation to the next”.¹⁶¹ As Chart 13C tells us, 81% of respondents were unable to converse in their Aboriginal language. The issue of language was also discussed in the 2010 Environics study. They asked respondents about which aspects of Aboriginal culture were most important to pass onto next generations, and 71% indicated that language was important.¹⁶² One respondent makes the link between language, spirituality and identity:

That’s where our identity is; it’s in our spirituality, not just in our language. The language is a big part of it. I believe spirituality is critical; understanding who we are is a big piece of identity. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

CHART 13C: Ability to Converse in Aboriginal Language (Quantitative n=803)



Despite the unlikelihood of full language fluency for many urban Aboriginal people, organizations remain committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal community members to learn their languages. The importance of language was also discussed by Restoule (2004) where the Toronto Aboriginal research participants he interviewed considered:

...knowledge of an Aboriginal language an important cultural aspect provided to the community. All the participants were presently learning indigenous languages and found that knowledge of an indigenous language, however limited, helped them to form stronger bonds with other speakers of that language in their communities.¹⁶³

This is an important consideration for Aboriginal organizations looking at providing language instruction programming. The National Aboriginal Centre of Toronto (NACCT) for example offers language instruction in both Anishnawbe and Cree languages. Community members have indicated that this is an important part of their identity development, and organizations such as the NCCT are responding accordingly. While there is a limited likelihood of fluency development with Aboriginal community members, the development of cohesive identity will be enhanced through the process. This becomes

160 Lawrence, B. (2004). “Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p 198.

161 Norris, M. J. (2009). The Role of First Nations Women in Language Continuity and Transition. In Valaskakis, G.G., Dion Stout, M. & Guimond, E. (Eds.). *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community and Culture*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, p 317.

162 Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Ottawa: Environics, p 49.

163 Restoule, J.P. (2004). *Male Aboriginal Identity Formation in Urban Areas: A Focus on Process and Context*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Toronto, p 232.

an important part of the positive cultural identity development described by Berry (1999) and builds on the concept of social identity, which is integral in an urban context for the strengthening of the Aboriginal community.¹⁶⁴

13.3 Adapting Traditional Culture to the City

Participation in cultural activities and ceremonies can be a challenge in an urban context. The fast-paced nature of cities can become a barrier for many traditional ceremonies and activities. In addition, the lack of available outdoor space also inhibits the practice of many activities. One respondent describes the tensions:

All religions and spiritualities are trying to adapt to this fast pace. We are trying to adapt to something that you are so used to, such an old traditional way of doing something and trying to adapt to something new. You have the old and the new clashing, sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Despite these challenges, Aboriginal organizations work hard to provide opportunities both within the urban community as well as outside of the community to participate in these important cultural practices. Organizations have traditional people on staff, as well as visiting Elders. This is considered important to the Aboriginal community in Toronto and 98% of survey respondents acknowledged that Elders play an important role in the community. In organizations, there is often an adaptation of traditional ceremonies to suit the needs and environment of urban Aboriginal people. One respondent describes how this adaptation takes shape:

They are shorter. On campus with Grafton Antone, he can talk for five hours but he can cut it down to about 20 minutes because the program is only an hour. I think they have to adapt their ceremonies to fit time-wise because they incorporate their ceremonies to fit other parts of a program or meeting. I believe that every single organization that I visited here in Toronto does incorporate ceremonies or at least

a smudge or at least a circle. They always lead a circle. I attended one meeting in city hall and Tim did the opening prayer. I had never heard it before and I had to sit down. Because of that I got to know Tim and he was really good introducing that and we could participate if we wanted to. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

You know we have to adapt to this day and time. We've got to adapt to 2009, have to adapt to here and now. Hold on to our spirituality, our ceremonies and traditions, but we got to really push these customs. Not force them on anybody by any means, I'm not saying that. I am just say that we got to make them more visible, or we've got to be more open to other ways of getting people the teachings. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

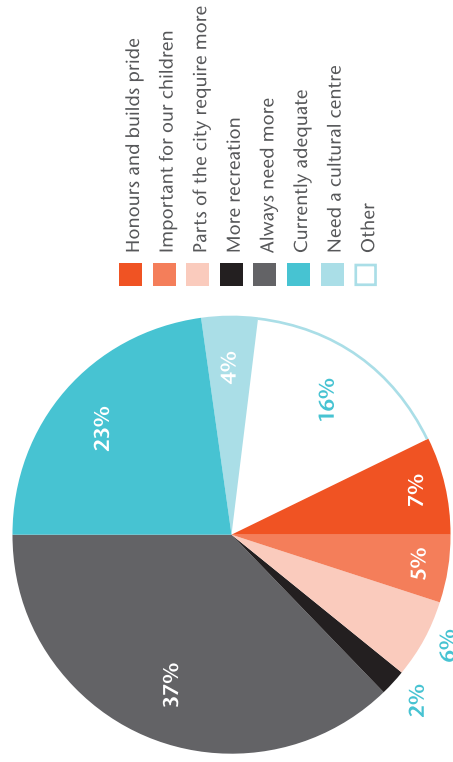
Despite the changing nature of ceremonies and traditional culture within an urban context, there are considerable opportunities for Aboriginal community members to participate and learn about their cultural identity. Organizations play an integral role in providing these services to community members.

13.4 Cultural and Spiritual Services in Aboriginal Organizations

There is no doubt that Aboriginal organizations in Toronto play a central role in community building and identity development. They provide a gathering space or 'meeting place'. All Aboriginal service organizations in Toronto have some cultural element which sets them apart from non-Aboriginal service organizations. The range and depth of traditional culture and spirituality that takes place varies from organization to organization, as well as program to program. The survey showed different responses to the question of the need for additional social, recreational, cultural and spiritual services for Aboriginal people. Chart 13D shows that 37% of respondents felt that there is a need for more services, and 23% indicated that the current level of service provision was adequate. This variance in response could be related to where the respondents lived and how tapped in to their Aboriginal organizations they are. For example, 6% stated that certain parts of the city require more services.

164 Berry, J.W. (1999). Aboriginal Cultural Identity. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XIX (1), 1-36.

CHART 13D: Additional Social, Cultural, Recreational, Spiritual Services (Qualitative n=165)



As well, it is important to note that when community survey respondents (n=484) were asked if they could wish for one thing that they would change for Aboriginal people living in the city, the top response (20%) indicated that they would like to see more opportunities for Aboriginal cultural participation and language immersion.

Different organizations approach the inclusion of culture and spirituality differently in their own day-to-day functioning as well as their overall mission. The interviews with the staff at Council Fire revealed that traditional culture is embedded within the organization. One staff member described the importance of culture on their identity and day to day living:

Our approach is culturally-based and everyone operates using those values. We treat each other according to the teachings. It is embedded in our work culture and put into practice. We are different because we carry ourselves in that way: with respect and positive self-identity. (Council Fire Case Study)

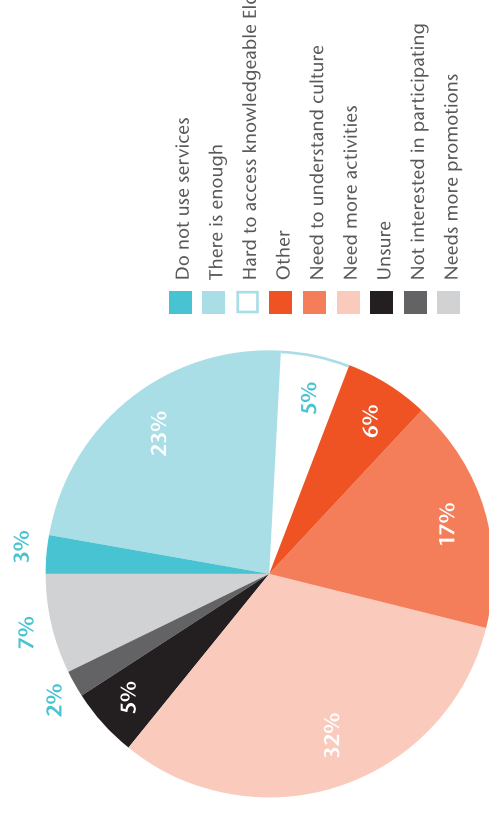
Another staff member commented on Council Fire's organizational culture:

...it comes from a broader cultural paradigm of First Nations people which embraces holism and lifelong learning. (Council Fire Case Study)

Despite the prevalence of traditional culture and spirituality in organizations, respondents still felt there were gaps in the provision of these opportunities. Chart 13E provides a description of some of the gaps identified by respondents. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated that there was a need for more activities. Conversely, 23% felt there were enough services, however 17% of respondents also indicated that there was a need to understand culture. There was a high level of participation in cultural activities by Aboriginal people in Toronto which indicates that such activities are an integral part of the community. When asked whether they participated in Aboriginal cultural activities in Toronto, 77% responded that they did participate. respondent describes the importance of cultural activities:

There are a lot of social gatherings in the city and they reinforce who we are as a people and that we are a proud people and that we have customs and traditions – a way of life that is unique and makes us who we are. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

CHART 13E: Gaps in Aboriginal Cultural and Identity Services (Qualitative n=165)



It is difficult to make generalizations about the gaps in cultural and tradition based services of Aboriginal organizations because different organizations provide a different range of services. At Nishnawbe Homes for example, the staff is committed to not duplicating services and programs that are offered by other organizations so as to not compete. Instead they focus on providing secure and stable housing in a supportive environment and as one staff person noted with regards to the provision of cultural programming in a housing organization:

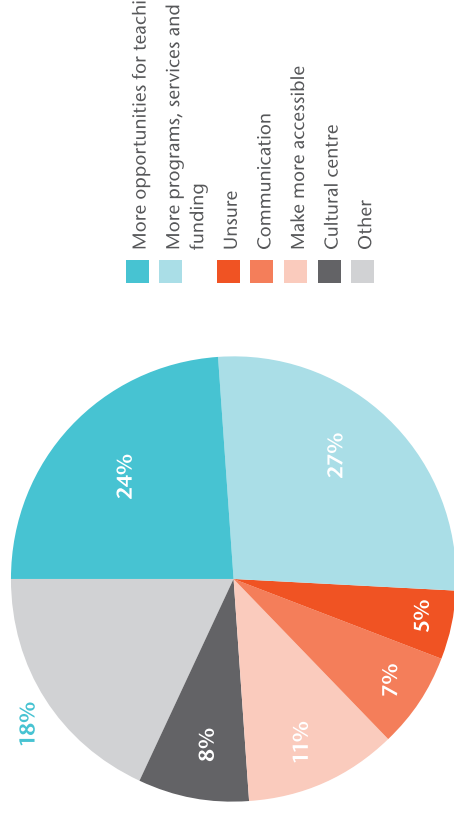
Housing provides a foundation in or to move on and be healthy. If your home is not in balance, it affects all other elements of people's lives. (Nishnawbe Homes Case Study)

Organizations like the NCCT are taking a different approach and are reducing the amount of social service provision and enhancing their cultural programming. The NCCT has been the foundation and starting point for many Aboriginal organizations in Toronto, and is now attempting to re-focus their efforts and target clientele. One staff person describes this shift that is happening at the NCCT:

The centre is moving towards the culture and getting away from social services. People are now happy to come to the centre. Now the middle class and families come: they were afraid before. (NCCT Case Study)

This shift is in line with what the Aboriginal community is looking for in terms of enhanced cultural and spiritual programming to fill some of the gaps. Chart 13F describes some of the responses of community members in addressing the current gaps in cultural services in Toronto. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of respondents felt that there is a need for more programs, services and funding, 24% felt there is a need for more opportunities for teachings, and 8% felt that there was a cultural centre needed. As the NCCT makes the shift from social service provision to a cultural centre, it can be expected that some of the gaps identified by Aboriginal community members in this research will be filled.

CHART 13F: Addressing the Gaps in Culture and Identity Services (Qualitative n=62)



One of the respondents describes the various opportunities to participate in cultural events in Toronto. What this respondent is speaking to is the importance of visibility of opportunities, rather than lacking of opportunities:

There are enough programs around, so people can easily get involved in cultural and ceremony. There are Thursday night socials at the Native Canadian Centre if people wanted to get involved in dancing. I think that is very important. Now I know where I can find it. For the Cree part of myself, it's very important, so I don't find being in southern Ontario limiting to spirituality. What I found limiting was that Cree spirituality was hidden for so long. Now people are starting to do ceremonies, and now I am starting to know where they are. It is going to be easier from now on. There are enough of us around, and we are trying to find each other, so it is all good. (Life History)

Anishnawbe Health has a long history of providing important cultural and spiritual programming to the Aboriginal community. For example, the traditional family services program provides access to traditional culture for children and youth in care as well as their families, caregivers and foster parents. Elements of the program include

naming ceremonies, rites of passage, family reunification ceremonies, family sweats and traditional adoption ceremonies. One respondent describes these programs:

Anishnawbe Health has one of the best programs, in the city, for Aboriginal spirituality. They have traditional healers, doctors, and sweat lodges which are open to the community. I think it is once a month for community members, for male and female community members. They have a sweat lodge every Friday, which is really benefiting people in the community, and also there are other ceremonies that they do there. It's helped out a lot of people and I think they're traditional healers that come to do the traditional doctoring, and of course the fasting in the spring and the fall. All those things are really benefiting a lot of people in this city. I mean that I think that there is still more that can be done, but I think they are really good. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Other respondents discussed their experiences of participating in cultural activities in the city and the importance of passing on traditional culture:

Ceremonies are great, I like them. I don't know, there is just something about them, the spirituality, you learn a lot of things. I go to a lot of things; I go to them every weekend. We go almost every weekend to powwows and have the grandfathers in the sweats, it's neat. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

My experience with mixed race is that they have their own animal spirit. Their acceptance is going take a lot of work; this is what the teachers always talk about. We have to pass it on to younger generation and people who want to learn about the culture. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Aboriginal culture within an urban context is much different from Aboriginal culture within a traditional territory or Aboriginal community. There is much more effort required to provide opportunities for community members to learn and experience elements of culture. Restoule (2008) argues that Aboriginal identity “is strongest when cultural values and knowledge emerge organically from family activities”.¹⁶⁵ The urban reality is much different, and land based activities that would provide such opportunities to learn about cultural values, are often not possible. Subsequently, we rely heavily on Aboriginal organizations or Aboriginal community members to formalize such activities for cultural learning and hence the development

165 Restoule, J.P. (2008). The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation Amongst the Urban Raised Generation. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(2) 15-34.

of positive identity. One respondent discusses this organic learning of Aboriginal culture described by Restoule (2008):

Sometimes I am with friends that are very traditional people and they share information, they share stories with me and I've learned so much just from that without having to go and see a traditional healer if I have a question about a dream or something. (Culture and Identity Focus Group)

Restoule (2008) also attributes the gaps in culture and identity development to the experiences of first generation Aboriginal migrants to the city. He describes the motivation that parents may have feel to hide their identity to provide greater opportunities to their children:

...now their children, with the confidence that comes from their improved education and economic security, are proud of their heritage, but unaware of it as the younger generation pursues greater knowledge and comprehension of their cultural background, parents may start to open up and talk about what it is to be Aboriginal.¹⁶⁶

This quote is a good example of some of the effects of intergenerational ethnic mobility on the parents and grandparents who were the Aboriginal migrants to urban centres. This shift in how Aboriginal people understand their identity has an indelible influence on type of cultural and identity based programming that an Aboriginal organization in Toronto must develop.

The role that organizations play in supporting this type of identity formation and development must be responsive to the needs of current generations of Aboriginal people, whether they are first, second or third generation urban Aboriginal community members. The significance of Aboriginal organizations in Toronto, either through social service agencies, economic development or through the opportunities to build positive identity formation for Aboriginal people integral to the growth of the community. Urban Aboriginal identity formation has only been examined in recent years; however we know that it has been happening for decades at the grassroots level around kitchen tables across the city.

166 Restoule, J.P. (2008). The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation Amongst the Urban Raised Generation. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(2), p. 22.

LAW AND JUSTICE AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

There are lots of programs available, but we just never went to them before. At first I went to programs because I had to, but now I like going there and I am getting to know more people at the different agencies and I am going to be getting my GED. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- There have been significant advancements made in the support of Aboriginal people involved with the justice system in Toronto and in the creation of Aboriginal spaces of restorative justice where the community is empowered to determine the justice needs of its members.
- In supporting Aboriginal victims and offenders, Aboriginal law and justice programs are contributing to community development, healing, strong Aboriginal identities and cultural revitalization.
- There continue to be challenges relating to police and security guard racial profiling of Aboriginal people, the undervaluing of Aboriginal victims and the overcharging of Aboriginal offenders.
- Aboriginal people involved in the justice system in Toronto tend to be those who are younger, experiencing poverty, have less education, and are experiencing a diversity of inter-related social problems including addictions, mental health challenges and social isolation.
- There is a need for a diversity of additional law and justice services to Aboriginal people living in Toronto.
- There is a need for a community-based review and evaluation of the Toronto Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit.

This chapter reviews some of the key considerations relating to Aboriginal people's experiences with the law and justice system in Toronto. The TARP community survey findings provide the basis for

the specific topics discussed in this chapter and are represented in various charts below, while the results from the key informant interviews and the law and justice focus group allow for a more detailed interpretation and understanding of the charts. As well, in helping to understand the broader, background context of Aboriginal people's experiences with the justice system in Canada, this chapter further incorporates a number of scholarly text and community reports.

Looking first at national patterns of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system as well as recent reforms, this chapter then examines the development of supportive law and justice programs and services available to the Aboriginal community in Toronto, examining levels of satisfaction with the justice system in Toronto. Aboriginal programming is positively linked to community development and cultural education and training opportunities. Nonetheless, respondents pointed to high levels of racial profiling as well as the need to expand services generally and to further develop law and justice programs for youth and victims. The TARP findings also pointed to the need for more education and awareness raising to the community on law and justice issues relating to Aboriginal people and for the creation of a community-based, Aboriginal Duty Counsel to work with the existing court workers.

14.1 Aboriginal Over-Representation in the Justice System: Background Causes and Reforms

In understanding the TARP findings on Aboriginal people and the justice system in Toronto, it is important to first provide an overview of some of the larger, national patterns of Aboriginal over-representation. As the first major study of Aboriginal people and the justice system, the 1988 Manitoba Justice Inquiry was conducted in response to the deaths of Helen Betty Osborne (1971) and J.J. Harper (1976). In examining a diversity of issues including, jail times, bail, pre-arrest detention, charging, time with lawyers and incarceration rates, the inquiry found that:

*Aboriginal over-representation is the end point of a series of decisions made by those with decision-making power in the justice system. An examination of each of these decisions suggests that the way that decisions are made within the justice system discriminates against Aboriginal people at virtually every point.*¹⁶⁷

The Manitoba Inquiry concluded that the justice system had failed Manitoba's Aboriginal people on a 'massive scale' and that it had been culturally insensitive and inaccessible, and has arrested and imprisoned Aboriginal people in grossly disproportionate numbers. Moreover, it found that Aboriginal people who are arrested are significantly more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be denied bail, spend more time in pre-trial detention and spend less time with their lawyers, and if convicted, they are more likely to be incarcerated.¹⁶⁸

In its report on Aboriginal people and the criminal justice system in Canada, *Bridging the Cultural Divide*, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) echoed many of the Manitoba findings, but on a national scale. RCAP concluded that the Canadian justice system is 'failing Aboriginal people' and pointed to a diversity of causes relating to cultural differences, Aboriginal poverty, systemic discrimination and the larger and totalizing affects of colonization. It further acknowledged that many of the deeply rooted causes of Aboriginal over-representation in the Canadian justice system go beyond the scope of the judicial system itself in that:

*The relatively higher rates of crime among Aboriginal people are a result of the despair, dependency, anger, frustration and sense of injustice prevalent in Aboriginal communities, stemming from the cultural and community breakdown that has occurred over the past century.*¹⁶⁹

According to Mary Ellen Turpel's submission to the Royal Commission,

When we carefully take apart Aboriginal experiences and perspectives on the criminal justice system — or for that matter any other 'issue' — a tangled and

*overarching web gets spun. From economic and social disempowerment to problems in the criminal justice system, Aboriginal peoples' issues are seeming indivisible — one crosses over to another in an interconnected and almost continuous fashion. There are no satisfactory isolated solutions to each of these problems — the fundamental unifying dilemma is that of control and power and the structural inability of Aboriginal peoples to take control of their lives in communities. This is what I see as the experience of colonization. Subjugation and loss of control premised on conceptions of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures inferior, needing protection or direction, and requiring supervision.*¹⁷⁰

RCAP recommendations therefore focused on both judicial reform, well as significantly changing the relationship that Aboriginal people have with the Canadian state. Judicial reforms were aimed at reducing over-representation through 'Indigenizing' the existing system to allow for greater Aboriginal involvement and cultural integration and sensitivity at all levels of the judicial process. Recommendations aimed at reforming the political relationship however, pointed the need for greater Aboriginal control and self-government through development of community and culturally-based Aboriginal justice processes separate from the existing system.

There have been many important developments since the release of the Manitoba Justice Inquiry and the RCAP report. In 1996, the Criminal Code was amended to include s. 718.2(e), and instruction to judges consider alternatives to imprisonment for all offenders, with special consideration given to Aboriginal offenders. This section was specifically interpreted in the 1999 Supreme Court decision, *R v. Gladue*, where the court discussed its role in addressing the 'pressing social problem of Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system:

The drastic over-representation of Aboriginal peoples within both the Canadian prison population and the criminal justice system reveals a sad and pressing social problem. It is reasonable to assume that Parliament, in singling out Aboriginal offenders for distinct sentencing treatment in s. 718.2(e), intended to attempt to redress this social problem to some degree. The provision may properly be seen

¹⁶⁷ For further reading please see the 1991 Manitoba Justice Inquiry Report at <http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volume1/chapter1.html>.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁹ For further reading, see 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, *Bridging the Cultural Divide: A Report on Aboriginal people and Criminal Justice in Canada*.

as Parliament's direction to members of the judiciary to inquire into the causes of the problem and to endeavour to remedy it, to the extent that a remedy is possible through the sentencing process.¹⁷¹

The Gladue decision pointed to the need to provide judges with information on the background factors leading to the offender coming into contact with the justice system, with specific attention being given to issues of colonization and the systemic discrimination. In addition, the information was necessary to include suggestions for a sentence that will address the reasons why the individual engaged in criminal activity as well as provide alternatives to incarceration. The idea of a 'Gladue Report' emerged from the creation of the first Gladue Court in Old City Hall.

The federal and provincial governments have also initiated steps towards reducing Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system through policy and program development aimed at enhancing Aboriginal control over justice within their communities, while incorporating Aboriginal values within mainstream justice processes.¹⁷² There has also been a significant development in restorative justice councils and Aboriginal justice programs within Aboriginal communities that are community and culturally-based. Broadly speaking, restorative justice councils accept Aboriginal offenders who agree to be diverted from the mainstream justice process and who take responsibility for their actions. The restorative process works to balance the relationship between the victim and offender and within the community overall through a process of teaching, counselling, and reconciliation.¹⁷³

14.2 The Aboriginal Justice System in Toronto

In keeping with RCAP's recommendation for more Aboriginal control over justice matters affecting Aboriginal people, Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (ALST) has made great strides in supporting Aboriginal people involved with the justice system and in creating Aboriginal spaces of restorative justice (Community Council) within the community is empowered to determine the justice needs of its members. Over the last 20 years, ALST has been able to develop a number of inter-related programs that have successfully provided legal support to its clients while engaging in a significant number of national and international legal advocacy activities, including litigation, law reform and inquest representation.

In keeping with the organizational mission to "strengthen the capacity of the Aboriginal community and its citizens to deal with justice issues and to provide Aboriginal controlled and culturally-based justice alternatives", ALST operates six main, inter-related programs including the Aboriginal Courtworker Program, the Community Council Program, the Gladue (Aboriginal Persons) Court Assistance Program, the Legal Advocacy Program, the Victim's Rights Advocacy Program and the Youth Program.

- The Aboriginal Court Workers Program provides a full range of legal support to Aboriginal people involved with the court system. Court workers explain legal rights and obligations to community members as well as assist in securing legal counsel, finding interpreters if they are needed as well as with pre-sentence reports, bail hearings and referrals, and help to assist with sentencing alternatives and options for clients.
- The Community Council Program consists of two main areas of responsibility: the Adult and Youth Diversion Community Council and the Family Community Council (Giiwedim Anang). The Community Council for Adult and Youth Diversion is a criminal diversion program for Aboriginal offenders - adult and youth - who live in Toronto. The project takes Aboriginal offenders out of the criminal justice system and brings them before members of the Aboriginal community as a process of restorative justice. The Family Community Council formally commenced in 2008 with the purpose of having parents, children, child welfare authorities and other family members jointly develop a plan that will meet the needs of the children with the cooperation and support of all parties.

171 For further reading, please see transcript of Supreme Court of Canada decision *R v. Gladue* at: <http://scc.lexum.org/en/1999/1999scr1-688/1999scr1-688.html>.

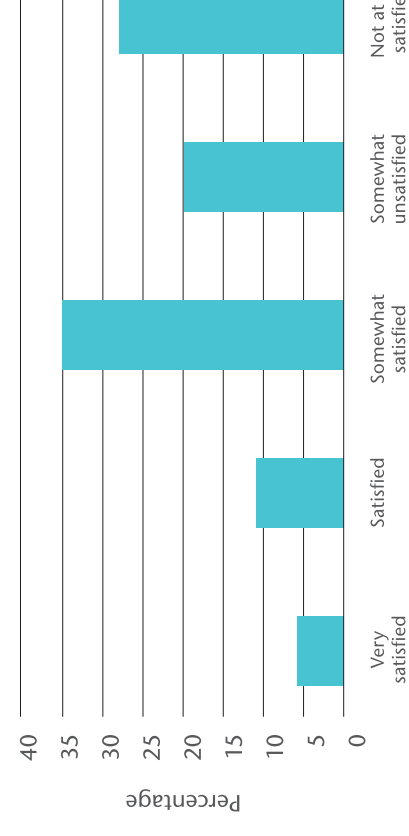
172 Please see the federal Aboriginal Justice Strategy (operating 113 programs in nearly 400 Aboriginal communities) at <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/ajs-sja/> as well as the federal court worker program at: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/pb-dgp/arr-ente/acp-apa.html> for examples of initiatives.

173 For further reading, please see 2005, McCaslin, W. *Justice As Healing. Indigenous Ways: Writings on Community Peacemaking and Restorative Justice*.

14.3 The TARP Findings on Aboriginal People and the Justice System in Toronto

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal involvement rates within the many facets of the justice system in Toronto, the community survey did reveal a significant rate of Aboriginal involvement in that 23% of respondents indicated having accessed an Aboriginal legal service (consulted with an Aboriginal lawyer, accessed the Gladue court, and/or accessed Court Worker program), in the past five years, while 21% of respondents reported having experienced being either a victim, offender, or both. Moreover, in spite of the array of effective, community-based justice programs available to Aboriginal people living in Toronto listed above, Chart 14A points to a general degree of dissatisfaction with the justice system in Toronto. A significant majority (83%) of community survey respondents indicated being either somewhat satisfied or unsatisfied with the justice system in Toronto, with 48% of respondents indicating that they are unsatisfied and 28% indicated that they were not satisfied at all. Only 11% of respondents said that they are satisfied with the justice system, while a small minority (6%) indicated being very satisfied.

Chart 14A: Level of Satisfaction With Justice System (Quantitative n=471)



- In response to the 1999 Gladue decision regarding the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders, the Gladue (Aboriginal Persons) Court Assistance Program consists of five Gladue Caseworkers who write reports for the three Gladue courts in Toronto and for courts in Hamilton/Brantford, Kitchener/Waterloo and Sarnia upon request. These reports document the life circumstances of an Aboriginal offender and provide recommendations that the court can consider in sentencing. The program also conducts educational sessions on Gladue and provides after-care to clients once they have been sentenced.
- The Legal Advocacy Program provides legal advice and representation on a diversity of topics relevant to its clients. The program further participates in law reform activities relating to public inquiries, human rights cases and Supreme Court of Canada and Ontario Court of Appeal interventions while also providing public education sessions in these areas.
- The Victim Rights Advocacy Program was created in response to the high level of victimization in Toronto's Aboriginal community. Guided by an Elder's Council, the program seeks to provide culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people who have been harmed by acts of violence.
- The Youth Program at ALST is designed to encourage youth involvement in the Aboriginal community and to facilitate their access to essential services. It further offers youth, who are either involved with the law or at risk of becoming involved with the law, the opportunity to participate in a diversity of recreational, cultural and counselling activities.¹⁷⁴

However there is still much work to be done; in his submission to the 2007 Ipperwash Inquiry, Jonathan Rudin noted that in spite of the positive impacts of many of these programs, Aboriginal over-representation within the justice system, as well as concerns over racial profiling, have not diminished in any significant way in the past 10 to 15 years.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ For more information, please see 'Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto' at: <http://www.aboriginallegal.ca/>.

¹⁷⁵ For further reading see Rudin, J. 2006. *Aboriginal People and the Criminal Justice System* at: http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/ipperwash/policy_part/research/pdf/Rudin.pdf. Also, please see La Prairie's 2002. *Aboriginal Over-representation in the Criminal Justice System: A Tale of Nine Cities* for a discussion of the Toronto Aboriginal community statistics in relation to other major cities in Canada.

In providing information on their level of satisfaction with the justice system in Toronto, TARP focus group and interview respondents referred to how getting into conflict with the law opened the doors for them to getting involved in the Aboriginal community, specifically in terms of cultural activities. Respondents expressed their appreciation for the various programs available to them through a number of Aboriginal social service agencies and that they now see the benefit in attending them regardless of whether or not they are required to do so through court order.

When I went to Jarvis (Gladue Court), I found out about the Native community. Once I got into conflict with the law, it opened up the door to a lot of cultural things that I didn't go to before. (Key Informant Interview)

There are lots of programs available, but we just never went to them before. At first I went to programs because I had to, but now I like going there and I am getting to know more people at the different agencies and I am going to be getting my GED. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

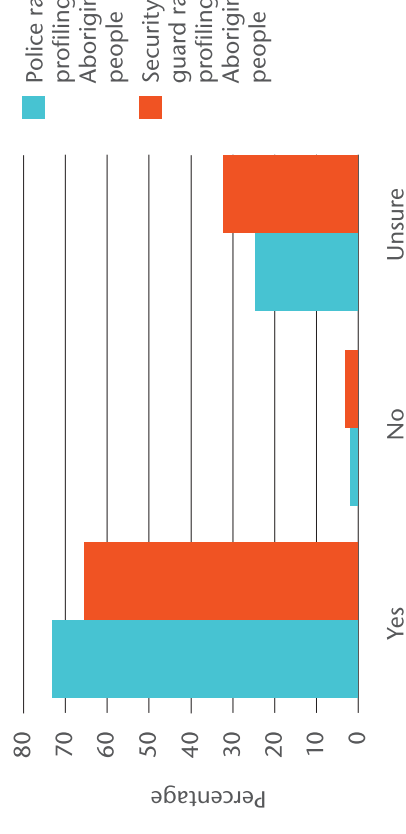
There are programs out there, but I choose to go to the Native ones... I feel more comfortable there and they're really helping me out. They are helping me to get settled, they write supportive letters for me, and lend me money if I need to get somewhere. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

These more positive findings on the roles of Aboriginal justice programs in supporting Aboriginal offenders and victims through community involvement and cultural training mirror those found in Proulx's recent text on *Reclaiming Aboriginal Justice, Identity, and Community*. In examining the Community Council as a community-based, restorative justice process, Proulx found that the work of the Council fostered a greater sense of Aboriginal community in Toronto, while contributing to healing, strong Aboriginal identities and cultural revitalization and transformation.¹⁷⁶

In providing further information on their level of dissatisfaction with the justice system in Toronto, TARP community survey respondents pointed to the problem of racial profiling of Aboriginal people by both police and security guards. In Chart 14B, we see that an overwhelming majority (72%) of community survey respondents indicated that

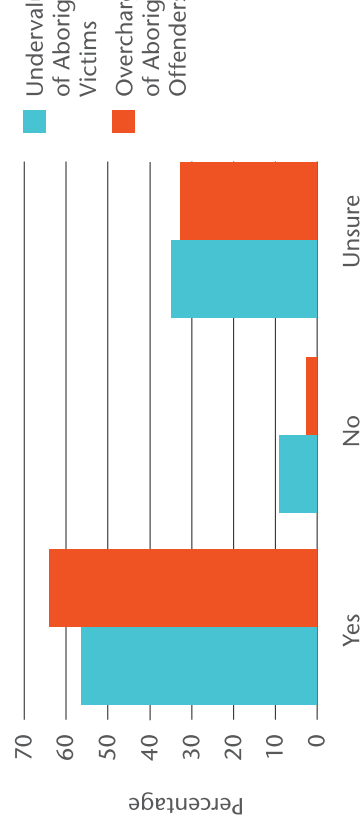
racial profiling of Aboriginal people by the police force exists, with 65% of respondents also indicated that racial profiling of Aboriginal people by security guards exists in Toronto.

Chart 14B: Police and Security Guard Racial Profiling of Aboriginal People (Quantitative n=493)



In addition, a majority (63%) of TARP respondents indicated that there is an over-charging of Aboriginal offenders in Toronto such that police are more likely to lay more serious charges against Aboriginal offenders rather than non-Aboriginal offenders. As we see in Chart 14C, 56% of respondents indicated that there is an undervaluing of Aboriginal victims such that police are less likely to lay charges in crimes involving Aboriginal victims.

Chart 14C: Dimensions of Aboriginal Racial Profiling in the Justice System (Quantitative n=500)



¹⁷⁶ For further reading, see Proulx, C. 2003. *Reclaiming Aboriginal Justice, Identity, and Community*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing.

It is important to note that the Ontario Human Rights Commission defines racial profiling as actions taken that are “based on stereotypical assumptions because of one’s race, colour, ethnicity, etc.”¹⁷⁷ and recently decided on a case where an Aboriginal man was found to be the victim of police racial profiling in Toronto when he was wrongly arrested for stealing a ‘new looking’ bicycle while walking in a laneway. The Commission is still determining the degree of liability to the offending officer as well as the amount of compensation to be awarded to the victim.¹⁷⁸

TARP law and justice focus group respondents also spoke of racial profiling and police harassment generally and referred to its prevalence in certain parts of the city with high proportions of Aboriginal residents.

It depends on the area, the part of town. In 14 Division, in the Native community, they will harass you. In the downtown area, there are a lot of skins walking around, a lot of Native homeless people. One time we were on the subway, and the TTC cops were bugging these five Native guys. Native profiling does happen. 14 Division cops are brutal, and 52 Division as well. Where there are pockets of First Nations people, the police will target them..especially in the Gabriel Dumont area. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

I’ve been around different places, like Bridal Path. I was having a beer and walking down the street, and the police actually said ‘why are you here? People come up here to get away from people like you.’ (Law and Justice Focus Group)

Even if I have nothing to worry about, if I see the cops, I get worried. On the TTC or with the cops, I always get worried. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

We’ve had many people that come to us to talk about the treatment they’ve received from police, and they will inevitably say that it is because they are Native. The community members who are stopped by police feel that they are stopped because of who they are and not what they’ve done. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

Beyond being wrongly stopped in the street and often harassed by police officers, TARP respondents spoke of experiences of negative and differential treatment within the courts and jails. Respondents spoke of police officers either initially interfering with the diversion

of Aboriginal offenders to the Aboriginal Community Council or facilitating their diversion due to a lack of awareness. As well, police interference with the diversion process is most prevalent in cases where there is an alleged assault against a police officer.

When I go to court, the cops lie, they make up stories that aren’t even true. They think that we’re already getting arrested for the same shit, so let’s get them off the street. So they lie so I can get locked up. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

In jail there is so much racism and put-downs, and there is very little understanding or cooperation with our cultural ways from the guards. (Key Informant Interview)

We’ve had complaints where the booking officers will say ‘Native court won’t you now’. Racism is very visible at the local level. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

I have clients who have been harassed by police who refuse to lodge complaints because they are afraid of the consequences. Often times they will get criminal charges, or something has been done to them, and they won’t say anything because the police won’t let them go through the diversion, Community Council process. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

We have a lot of clients who get charged with police assault. If we try to divert the process, we have to get the permission of the victim, who is the officer. The majority of the police officers don’t know about the diversion program. I think that’s because of the lack of training. The cops don’t ever think, I shouldn’t touch them because of ALST. At the local level, it’s just not there. If they do know anything about ALST they are usually misinformed. (Law and Justice Focus Group)

And lastly, one respondent noted that an important legal challenge for Aboriginal people involved with the justice system in Toronto is the conservative nature of the Canadian justice system itself and that in spite of the legal support for clients and the possibility of diverting them into culturally appropriate forms of restorative justice, the efforts require the education, support and cooperation of the justice system and lawyers themselves:

One major challenge for our clients is that judges and Crown attorneys are reluctant to change their ways of doing things and are not updating themselves and trying to understand the Aboriginal situation and seriously engage with the meaning of Gladue. (Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Case Study)

177 For further information, see:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/factsheets/whatisracialprofiling>.

178 Please see Toronto Star article at: <http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/article/957700--aboriginal-man-subjected-to-racial-profiling-by-toronto-cops>.

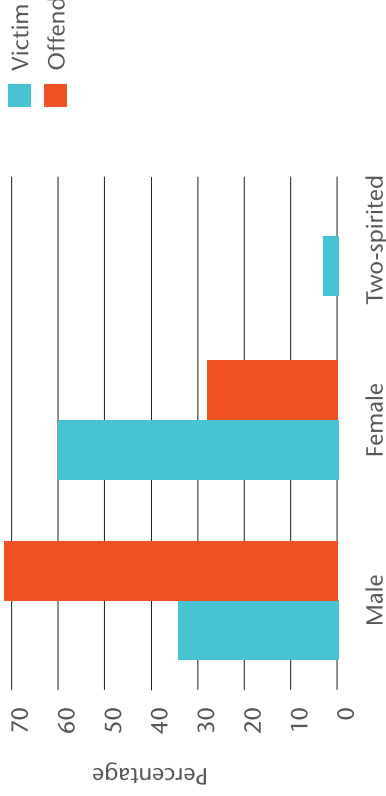
14.4 Profile of Aboriginal People Involved with the Justice System in Toronto

Aboriginal people involved in the justice system in Toronto tend to be those who are younger, experiencing poverty, have less education and are experiencing a diversity of inter-related social problems including addictions, mental health challenges and social isolation. In terms of some of the characteristics of those presently involved with the justice system in Toronto as either a victim or offender, the TARP community survey findings pointed to the prevalence (72%) of offenders with-in the less than \$30,000 per year income bracket, with 56% earning less than \$20,000 per year. Aboriginal victims, however, tend to be more evenly distributed across all income brackets, although 46% are still earning less than \$20,000 per year. As well, Aboriginal offenders reported as having less educational success, with 51% having a high school diploma or less, and 81% reporting having attained (but not completed) some post secondary education or less. Aboriginal victims however, tended to be equally represented from having completed high school to having a university degree. As one respondent put it:

Aboriginal offenders tend not to be well educated and so this really limits their opportunities and they get stuck and it results in low self-esteem and then the gangs pick them up. (Key Informant Interview)

Moreover, Aboriginal women are more likely to be victims, while Aboriginal men identified more as offenders. Of those who indicated as having been a victim, 60% were women, 34% were men, and 6% identified as two-spirit; while of those who identified as having been an offender, 72% were men, 28% were women. (See Chart 14D)

Chart 14D: Aboriginal Involvement in the Toronto Justice System Across Gender (Quantitative n= 131)



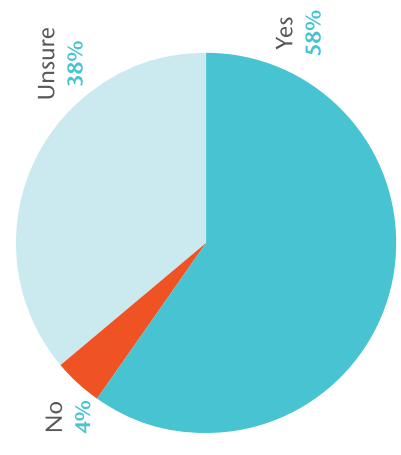
As well, a significant proportion (61%) of TARP respondents who identified as being Aboriginal offenders were below the age of 34, with 25% being between the ages of 18 to 24, and 89% being below the age of 44. Those who identified as victims however, were represented evenly between the ages of 25 to 64, with only 10% being between the age of 18 to 24, and 2% being 65 years and older. In addition, a program evaluation of the Community Council Program (CCP) (based upon the data from files of 106 CCP clients) conducted in 2000 documented an array of inter-related client challenges, with the further identification of issues of high levels of transience, social isolation from community and support service providers. Client challenges recorded in this report included:

- an unstable or traumatic childhood – at least half of the 1995-97 cohort been adopted, placed in foster homes or had attended a residential school;
- a low level of education – two-thirds of this cohort have less than a high school education;
- a high level of substance abuse problems – approximately 60% have problems with alcohol and/or drugs;

14.5 Gaps in Law and Policing Services for Aboriginal People in Toronto

From Chart 14E we see that a majority (58%) of TARP community respondents indicated that there were prevailing gaps in service for Aboriginal people in the area of law and justice in Toronto, while 4% indicated that there were not, and 38% remained unsure.

Chart 14E: Are There Gaps in Law and Justice Services to Aboriginal People in Toronto? (Quantitative n=496)



In addition to better addressing the challenges of poverty, addictions, and related social problems of those Aboriginal people involved with the Toronto justice system outlined above, TARP key informants interviewed and focus group respondents further pointed to the need to raise awareness and provide education and training on the cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. They are expressed within the mainstream justice system. More education and awareness raising on the existing reforms to the justice system such as s.718.2(e), the Gladue decision, and the Toronto (C) was also identified by TARP respondents as being necessary. More of these education activities need to happen within the Aboriginal community as well as with police officers, lawyers and judges within the mainstream system.

- a large proportion of repeat offenders – three-quarters have had criminal convictions prior to their involvement with the CCP;
- a low level of employment – less than one-fifth were employed at the point of diversion;
- little connection with the Aboriginal community – over half had no involvement with Aboriginal organizations or services;
- little contact with services that could assist them with their problems – almost 90% had had no contact with social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists;
- a high level of transiency – many efforts to locate and contact these clients as well as more recent ones were unsuccessful.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, when asked about ‘the major challenges facing clients today’, a significant number of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto case study respondents (77%) spoke of the core issues of poverty and addictions stemming from the intergenerational trauma associated with the residential schools. A number (38%) of respondents further spoke of the related challenges of inadequate housing and homelessness, mental health, cultural loss and identity confusion. Several respondent (30%) specifically identified the challenges of youth clients as including homelessness, unhealthy diets, low self-esteem, high dropout rates and low levels of employment.

Poverty and addictions relating to intergenerational trauma from the residential schools are the major problems facing our clients. (Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Case Study)

Our clients suffer from low self-esteem and education and are mostly without employment. All of our clients have either a drug or sexual addiction and many mix the two in high risk ways which contribute to high rates of HIV in Gladue cases. Many have simply stopped caring. (Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Case Study Respondent)

The biggest challenges facing our Youth clients is the lack of housing and employment. Many are in shelters and are couch surfing. What is really sad is that often their self-esteem is so low that they don't want to go to school and then get a job. They don't feel that they deserve it. Most have a poor diet and the younger ones (13 to 15) are skipping school while the older ones (16 to 21) have dropped out. (Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Case Study)

¹⁷⁹ For further reading please see, 2000. Evaluation of the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto Community Council Program: Final Report. At: <http://www.web.net/~alst/evaltes.htm>.

There needs to be more culture in the mainstream system.....more Elders in jail and smudging in the courts. Right now there is such a culture clash and we can get lost in there and never get out. (Key Informant Interview)

Aboriginal clients have little understanding of how the legal system works. There is definitely a need for more Aboriginal probation officers to help the youth with their legal issues. (Key Informant Interview)

Toronto has a comprehensive, alternative justice system. The problem is that many youth are unaware of their options and if they don't identify as Native, they lose this opportunity. (Key Informant Interview)

Racial profiling is a such a problem with the police...there needs to be ongoing education and training for new recruits. (Key Informant Interview)

TARP respondents also identified the need to expand law and justice services to all of the GTA and to provide more community-based services to Aboriginal youth as well as victims of crimes.

There is a growing Aboriginal community in Peel. We struggle to provide services there, but there are big needs and no programming. We have a court worker who goes to the Peel court once a week. I don't know how we deal with it, but it is a gap. We amended our by-laws to go beyond the GTA. We did a public inquiry in Vancouver, and we went to Ipperwash. The board and the members recognized that people move and migrate. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

The one thing that is clear over the years, is that we've really seen a change in the face of our community members. There are more youth and victims that are under-served and so we've been trying to supplement our services to meet the needs of those members of our communities. We now have a Youth Community Council at ALST. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

Serving victims is a problem because of funding issues. The Victim Secretariat won't fund ALST because we aren't a transfer agency. Whenever there are calls for proposals to serve victims of crime, it's only for pamphlets. We can't actually serve our clients so we rely on training dollars. This is not ideal because their cases are long-term and training dollars only allows training for 52 weeks. They don't have a strong enough background to work with our clients for a long enough time. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

Also, one focus group respondent spoke of the need for funding for an ALST duty counsel to work with the court workers and represent Aboriginal people at bail hearings:

One of the biggest unmet needs is not being able to represent people at bail hearings. We don't have staff lawyers doing criminal law. There are only three

lawyers here. There is nothing that prevents us, it's a funding issue. Because of the way legal aid is structured, duty council is a different silo of funding. One of the difficulties is because duty council is not part of our team, they don't work getting our clients bail. It would work better if we had the duty council and court workers all a part of one team. So it would be ideal to have a duty council. There is a duty council that sits in the Gladue Court, but they get rotated. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

And lastly, TARP respondents spoke of the overall ineffectiveness of the Toronto Police Services, Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit. Initiated in 1992 as a form of communication and relationship building between the Toronto Aboriginal community and the Police Services combined aspects of traditional, Aboriginal peacekeeping with community policing,¹⁸⁰ TARP respondents noted its value in its early work addressing community complaints and currently through facilitating Canadian Police Information Centre reports, but felt that otherwise its role and usefulness has diminished over time and that it presently does little to deal with community complaints, reduce crime and improve police relations with the Aboriginal community.

The Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit has been around since 1992 and it has never really evolved. There was a brief attempt to be proactive and they started to take complaints against the police, so that resulted in Aboriginal people getting charged with public mischief. Their role was supposed to be dealing with Aboriginal protests, like during Oka. It was more of an intelligence-gathering unit and they've never been comfortable performing any role that the community would want them to do. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

They are helpful in getting CPIC reports. We have clients who would prefer to surrender to peacekeepers rather than the division. But they won't do that. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

When I was here in 1995, I had the cell phone numbers of the APU and I could call them if a client called me. I could call them and they would go and help. They wanted to create roles for themselves and this appears to have disappeared. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

Since they have been opened, nothing has been done in the APU, there has been no evaluation, no needs assessment, nothing since they've been opened. (Justice and Policing Focus group)

180 For further information, please see the Toronto Police Services, Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/communitymobilization/aboriginal.php>.

URBAN ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE

previous efforts towards urban Aboriginal governance in Toronto, chapter further incorporates scholarly texts as well as local community reports respectively.

Although articulating a general desire for increasing degrees of control and governance over Aboriginal community life in Toronto, TARP findings also point to a significant degree of uncertainty and apprehension. Understood to include the development of processes of political representation and accountability, the TARP findings of Aboriginal governance in Toronto outline a diverse array of community concerns and questions relating to possible changes to existing political and legal relationships as well as to the complex nature of Aboriginal community in Toronto itself.

Self-government means to be able to decide what is in our best interest...not the government deciding this for us. It is about running our own affairs and running our own lives. (Key Informant Interview)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- There is strong support within the Toronto Aboriginal community to develop an elected, representative political body as an expression of urban Aboriginal self-government.
- There is, however much uncertainty and apprehension within the Toronto Aboriginal community concerning how this can happen and what form it will take.
- A number of challenges to the development of Aboriginal self-government were identified including, the practical challenges of development, a lack of community cohesion, a lack of government recognition, and inter-agency competition.
- The City of Toronto has formally committed to supporting the Aboriginal right to self-government in the city.
- The Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) is a representative voice of Aboriginal social service agencies in Toronto and most able to support the development of a more representative community-wide governing process.

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key considerations relating to the development of Aboriginal governance in Toronto. In addition to the findings that emerged from the TARP community survey and key informant interviews, this chapter also includes results from four separate focus groups on the question of governance. As well, in setting the political and legal context and in outlining

15.1 Urban Aboriginal Governance in Toronto: Contextual Background

In 1995, the federal government formally announced its policy of Aboriginal Self-Government, recognizing it as an inherent Aboriginal right under section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act.¹⁸¹ The policy officially states that the inherent right is based on “the view that Aboriginal peoples of Canada have the right to govern themselves in relation to matters that are internal to their communities.”¹⁸² Over years both the courts, and the various levels of Canadian government have interpreted this right as applying exclusively to First Nation relation to the settling of land and resource claims and the development of community governance structures.¹⁸³

In cities across Canada, there are instances of urban Aboriginal agency cooperation and coordination in the interests of enhancing community

¹⁸¹ In Section 35, the 1982 Constitution Act provides constitutional protection to Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada and specifically states that “existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed”, while defining Aboriginal peoples in Canada to include Indians, Inuit, and Métis.

¹⁸² For further reading, please see the federal policy statement *The Government of Canada’s Approach to Implementation of the Inherent Right and the Negotiation of Aboriginal Self-Government* at <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/al/lcdc/cl/pubs/sg/sg-eng.asp#inhrs>.

¹⁸³ For further reading, see Belanger’s 2008 ed. *Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues*.

governance as well as some Aboriginal organizations exercising provincial statutory mandates in the areas such as child welfare and education. Nonetheless, there are presently no formal agreements between urban Aboriginal communities and either of the three levels of Canadian government that recognize the urban Aboriginal right of self-government.

Arguable urban Aboriginal self-government calls for a different approach from the land-based models most often associated with First Nations and 'modern day' treaty governments. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) proposed two possible models of urban Aboriginal governance. The 'reform of urban government and public authorities' model called for greater local political participation through designated Aboriginal political representation on municipal councils and related political bodies and the co-management of urban programs and services. As well, a 'community of interest' model proposed greater Aboriginal political autonomy through the voluntary association of a diversity of urban Aboriginal organizations. In this way, urban Aboriginal agencies would form an integrated Aboriginal public service that would then establish a larger city-wide politically representative body.¹⁸⁴

In relation to the RCAP urban governance models mentioned above, the Aboriginal community in Toronto is arguably moving towards both approaches. Although not occupying a designated seat on municipal council, Aboriginal community agencies are participating formally in local government through their representation on the city's Aboriginal Affairs committee, which is presently working towards the development of a larger urban Aboriginal framework.

As well, Toronto Public Health has established a community-based 'Round Table on Aboriginal Health in Toronto' that works to address gaps in health programs and services for Aboriginal peoples. A significant expression of the 'reform of urban government and public authorities' is also found in the 2010 *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities in Toronto* in which the City of Toronto has formally

committed to "supporting the Aboriginal right to self-determination by working inclusively with Aboriginal communities in Toronto".¹⁸⁵

In terms of the 'community of interest' model of urban Aboriginal governance suggested by RCAP, a provisional Aboriginal Council of Toronto¹⁸⁶ was formed in 2001 as an initial step towards the creation of an elected, politically representative governing body. The Council established a clan-based governance model that included a portfolio system as well as input from existing Aboriginal agencies. It was then decided that the Council would be made up of 18 representatives either elected or appointed by their respective groups and that Aboriginal individuals residing in the Greater Toronto Area would be considered to be citizens. The Council went on to articulate a Toronto Aboriginal community vision as well as strategic priorities in the area of Aboriginal and treaty rights, service delivery, justice and policy. Aboriginal arts and culture, economic development, community inter-governmental relations, the environment, education and citizenship. Ultimately however, although the Council did establish implementation work plan that included citizenship registration, law development, and elections, these tasks were never completed. The Aboriginal Council of Toronto, as a fully elected and representative expression of urban Aboriginal government, was never realized. Nonetheless, in the 2004 report, *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Consultation*, the need to centralize programs and services for enhanced communication and cooperation emerged as an important theme relating to Aboriginal self-government. Across nine social sectors considered as part of this 2004 community consultation, the need to develop a process of community representation at the centre or 'hub' of an integrated and coordinated Aboriginal public service was identified.¹⁸⁷

185 For further reading, please see 2010 City of Toronto, *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities in Toronto – Towards A Framework for Urban Aboriginal Relations in Toronto* at: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-30866.pdf>.

186 For further reading on the work of the Aboriginal Council of Toronto, see 2002, *Aboriginal Council of Toronto: Founding Meeting*, at <http://www.turtleisland.org/news/news-urban-toronto.htm>.
187 The nine sectors included the arts, business, children and youth, education, employment and training, health, housing and homelessness, justice and seniors, elders, and the disabled. For further reading, see 2004, *All Voices Heard: The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Community Consultation Final Report*.

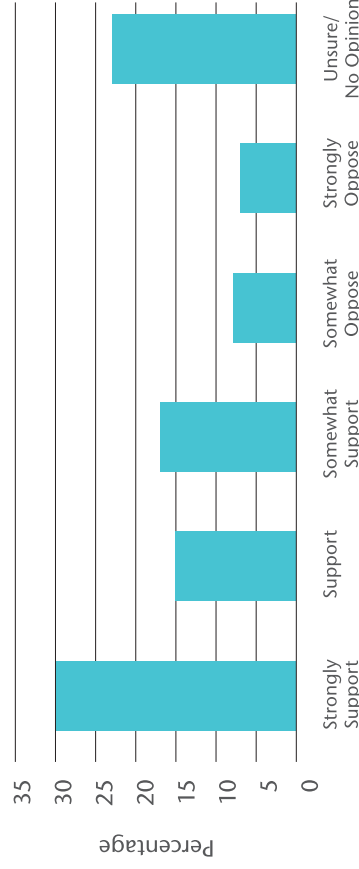
184 For further reading please see the 1996, Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Volume 4, Chapter 7, *Urban Perspectives* at: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124124814/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sjm7_e.html.

As outlined above, the 'community of interest' model also recognized that greater political autonomy could occur through the voluntary association of agencies and in the 1980s a number of urban Aboriginal social services organizations in the GTA came together to cooperate and coordinate the delivery of services and formed the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Association (TASSC). Importantly, these Aboriginal agencies are culturally-based and deliver services in a diversity of key areas of community life including, child and family care, housing, employment and training, law and justice, health and well-being and poverty reduction. In the absence of an elected Aboriginal Council, TASSC is increasingly looked to as the representative voice for the Toronto Aboriginal community.

15.2 Renewed Interest in Urban Aboriginal Self-Government in Toronto

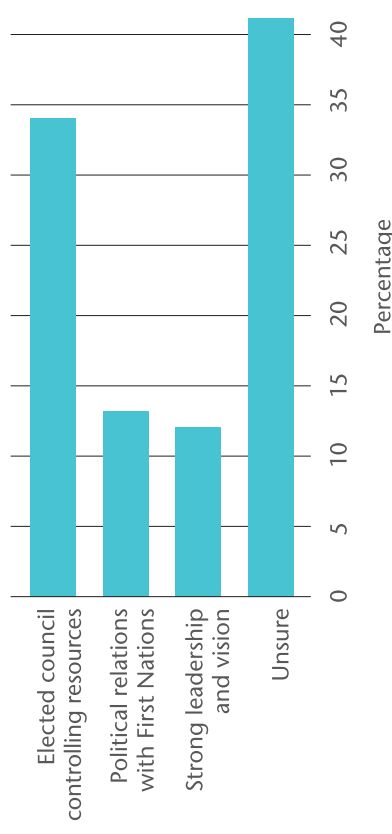
When questioned on their level of support for urban Aboriginal self-government, a significant majority (62%) of TARP community survey and key informant interview respondents were generally supportive of the idea, with 30% indicating strongly supportive. (Chart 15A).

CHART 15A: Support for Urban Aboriginal Self-Government (Quantitative n=801)



However, as seen in both Chart 15A and 15B, there are a significant number of respondents who remain unsure about both their level of support (23%) or unsure as to what self-government actually means (41%). Of those key informant interview respondents that identified the meaning of urban Aboriginal self-government, most (34%) indicated that it was a manner of accessing more power and control over resources. A minority of others thought that it was related to maintaining political relations with First Nations (13%) and having strong leadership and community vision.

CHART 15B: Meaning of Urban Aboriginal Self-Government (Qualitative n=97)



In terms of the identified (34%) desire for urban Aboriginal self-government as an elected council that would control resources, TARP focus group respondents indicated that the existing system is heavily controlled by all layers of the Canadian government through policies and program development and funding protocols. In working to respond to the needs of the community, TARP respondents spoke to the difficulties of adhering to the policy and funding priorities predetermined by the government. Moreover, because of the prevalence of inconsistent and piecemeal funding arrangements, Aboriginal agencies find themselves in competition with each other for scarce resources.

Self-government means all the control being in the hands of the community a

that elected leaders listen to our voices in deciding where to spend the money. (Key Informant Interview)

Self-government means to be able to decide what is in our best interest...not the government deciding this for us. It is about running our own affairs and running our own lives. (Key Informant Interview)

When we are talking about self-government, don't you have to get rid of the existing system first? We are talking about self-governance in a system that goes against the whole idea of self-government. We are pandering and competing for dollars that are tied to priorities that we didn't agree to and that we often don't want. (Governance Focus Group, Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto)

We can be responsible for our own people and administer our own dollars, to identify our own needs and this could be done through elected committees that have their own stream of funding. (Key Informant Interview)

There is just too much control of Aboriginal agencies by the federal, provincial and municipal governments. We are fully accountable to them in our reporting and evaluation requirements and if we don't meet their needs, then they look for another Aboriginal agency to fund. (Key Informant Interview)

As well, one respondent spoke to the fear of supporting urban Aboriginal self-government as it challenges existing power relations and can be seen as threatening to present responsibilities of senior government public servants who might place existing funding arrangements in jeopardy.

It's hard for an Aboriginal organization because of where our funding comes from, mostly provincial. Self-government would have to be careful what they take on because projects and agencies can easily become blacklisted from receiving government funding. (Governance Focus Group)

Thought of in these ways, urban Aboriginal self-government would result in Aboriginal people and their agencies determining policy and program priorities to best meet the needs of their community members and the coordination of the delivery of the services so as to foster inter-agency complementarity rather than competition.

Establishing political relations with First Nations and Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) was also identified by a number (13%) of community survey and key informant interview respondents as an important factor for urban Aboriginal self-government in Toronto.

With reference to the many ongoing connections that Toronto Aboriginal residents maintain with their communities of origin, respondents spoke to the need to coordinate urban and First Nation self-government processes so as to create an integrated and unified governing system as well as a collective political voice. Specifically in terms of political representation, one respondent spoke of the 2002 Corbiere¹⁸⁸ decision that secured the right of urban Aboriginal residents to vote in reserve elections. This respondent went on to suggest that a reciprocal political relationship with First Nation involvement in urban Aboriginal governance would also be beneficial.

We are one people and we need to stand together. We can't allow ourselves to become divided between urban and First Nations. (Key Informant Interview)

I live in Toronto and vote for Chief and Council in my First Nation. We need to force at all levels of Aboriginal governments. (Key Informant Interview)

TARP focus group respondents spoke of previous efforts to build political relationships with political Aboriginal organizations such as the Métis Nation of Ontario, Assembly of First Nations and Chief of Ontario, but that, ultimately, it was difficult to coordinate our interests.

The Chiefs of Ontario did a lot of advocating for urban Aboriginal governments and we were interested in working together, but then they left Toronto and we never really heard from them again. As far as we can tell they only really focus on reserve issues. (Governance Focus Group)

The AFN did a presentation to the board and discussed how they were going to get involved in urban issues, and that was really a result of the Corbiere case. We haven't seen anything since that time. (Governance Focus Group)

A lot of our clients identify as First Nation and many people still maintain that connection and will turn to them for help, particularly for education funding, but also for other family matters. We are always trying to coordinate with the various First Nations on a range of issues relating to the support of our clients. (Governance Focus Group)

A number (12%) of community survey and key informant interview respondents further indicated in Chart 15B that urban Aboriginal self-government entailed a strong leadership and community vision. As discussed below, many respondents pointed to the many barriers

188 For further reading, please see Centre for Constitutional Studies at: <http://www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ccs/rulings/Corbiere.php>.

Aboriginal community development and cohesion and the lack of a collective vision as well as the leadership to carry that vision forward.

A selection of TARP focus group respondents suggested that the Toronto Aboriginal youth offered the most hope and potential leadership for moving past the present barriers to Aboriginal community building in Toronto. Participants further stressed the need to fully support the education and cultural needs of the youth in order to fully access this potential.

The youth are now a part of the change that is happening. They are seeing the similarities between people from different nations, and from Métis, Inuit and First Nations peoples, and are not so divisive as adults. The youth may hold the future for self-government. (Governance Focus Group)

We also need more Aboriginal people in leadership positions. At the City of Toronto right now there is a job-shadowing program for female youth who are ethnic minorities, but there are no Aboriginal people there. The female youth job-shadow a councillor so they can see what being in a leadership position entails. We need to put ourselves forward and create that understanding with our young people. (Governance Focus Group)

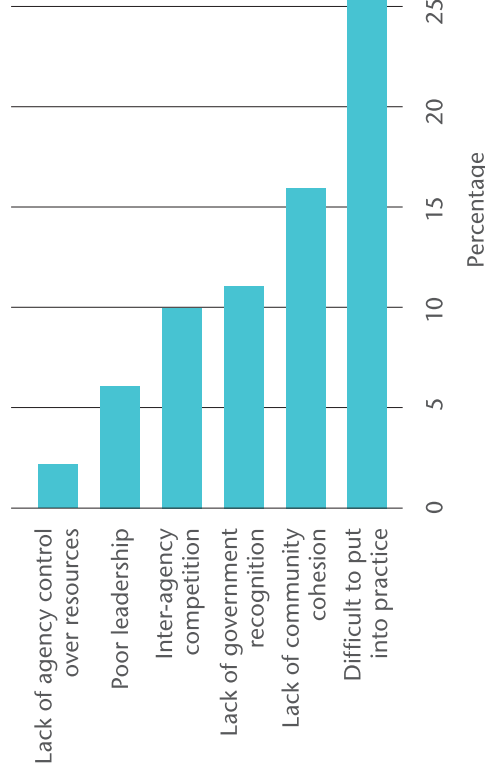
Many people do not understand Aboriginal self-government and all that this can mean. It is really up to the youth, but we need a training centre that offers leadership and community building skills and mentorship for them. (Governance Focus Group)

15.3 Challenges to Urban Aboriginal Self-Government in Toronto

In Chart 15C we see that TARP respondents raised a diversity of key challenges to the possibility of Aboriginal self-government in Toronto. The number one challenge identified by a number (30%) of respondents focused on the practical difficulties of implementing self-government in terms of the structural changes necessary to create an elected, representative forum. Moreover, 16% of respondents spoke to the lack of community cohesion necessary for political involvement in terms of cultural and political identity diversity, little sense of a collective citizenship, an uninvolved middle class, and the challenges of Aboriginal residents living across all areas of the GTA. A number

(12%) of respondents also spoke to the struggle for government recognition in terms of the role of TASSC as a community leader. Lastly, a minority (10%) of respondents pointed to the prevalence of inter-agency competition over funding as an important barrier to development of self-government in Toronto.

CHART 15C: Challenges to Aboriginal Self-Government in Toronto (Qualitative n=119)



In understanding the diverse challenges of putting Aboriginal government into practice in Toronto, it is important to first note respondents understood self-government as an elected, representative process and as something more than the present coordination cooperation of Aboriginal agencies made possible by the formation of TASSC. More specifically, they drew the distinction between TASSC as an association of the Executive Directors of Aboriginal social service providers in Toronto, and a publically elected and politically representative governing body.

TASSC is not appropriate as a governance body because they are social service agencies serving the community. We are support service organizations and as we don't want to be politically involved. We want to support each other and have TASSC become a political machine. (Governance Focus Group)

There should be a political organization that is created. But it's not TASSC's mandate nor vision to be politically active. Each one of the ED's are politically active, but not as a TASSC member. As an individual, I am politically active. There is room for a political entity, but not through TASSC. (Governance Focus Group)

We have a vocal community, and TASSC is an example of that. Before TASSC had come up against some problems, but now they are focused and working cohesively. They could be a player in bringing issues forward but they are just social service agencies. Health and the arts community are not represented by TASSC. We would need others who currently don't sit at the table. (Governance Focus Group)

One respondent did nonetheless identify TASSC as the present community leader and the organization most able to support development of a more representative governing process:

TASSC and its many Aboriginal agencies are controlling the delivery of services in Toronto and they represent the community... they could evolve into a larger urban governance structure. (Governance Focus Group)

As shown in Chart 15C, a significant number (30%) of TARP respondents further spoke of the many complex and practical challenges of developing a system of representative Aboriginal governance in Toronto including the need to define and foster a sense of citizenship, develop a model that reflects Aboriginal cultural diversity within the city and transform the existing funding structures such the elected representatives assume control over funding priorities rather than the various levels of Canadian government. However, as seen in the above three charts, although there is a desire to have greater control over their lives as urban Aboriginal people in Toronto, many respondents expressed a great deal of uncertainty and apprehension in moving in this direction.

The general Aboriginal population in Toronto does not understand self-government and when they don't understand this they can't fully get behind an initiative. They don't understand administration or elected and traditional council. Mostly, people are concerned about their own safety and not losing what little they have. (Key Informant Interview)

People are unsure and quite fearful. They do not want another Indian Affairs in the city. They are very reluctant to trust in a leader and to try something new. (Key Informant Interview)

In terms of defining and fostering a sense of urban Aboriginal citizenship in Toronto, several focus group respondents spoke of the lack

of interest in coming together politically and the challenges of community building.

There are others who are just not interested in politics. So there has never been critical mass to create a government body. (Governance Focus Group)

It is all about critical mass. There are not enough people in the same place at same time, so the community doesn't have an opportunity to 'gel'. (Governance Focus Group)

There is a lot of self-interest within certain groups and agencies. In Toronto, there is a community built around social service agencies and a large number Aboriginal people in the GTA do not participate in the community because of (Key Informant Interview)

The challenge of developing a sense of an Aboriginal community also identified by a number (16%) of TARP respondents as a barrier to the development of a system of Aboriginal governance in Toronto (Chart 15C). More specifically, respondents spoke of the cultural as well as political identity diversity, the lack of community involvement of the middle class, and the challenge of bringing people together who live in a diversity of areas across the GTA.

I can't see that happening because there are too many nations in Toronto. Toronto is a melting pot. It's not just First Nations people, but also Métis and Inuit. There isn't even agreement on the number of Aboriginal people in the City of Toronto. The census says 21,000 and the city says it is more like 65,000 to 85,000 people. (Governance Focus Group)

The Aboriginal nations and cultural teachings in Toronto are very diverse. I am sure how people could come together politically....but it would be interesting to try. (Key Informant Interview)

This would mean creating one new nation made up of multiple First Nations as well as other Aboriginal groups in Toronto. I am not sure that this is a good thing. (Key Informant Interview)

An important segment of the population which is often overlooked but which contains possibilities for leadership and governance development is the middle class. Aboriginal people who are in lower socio-economic groups have access to programs and services of agencies as clients and are able to receive information easily, but for those who are 'middle class', the opportunities to participate in community life are not as readily available.

The board of directors who represent agencies are only one small segment of the Aboriginal population. There is a large middle class who do not sit on BOD and are not clients. There is no opportunity for them to build community. (Governance Focus Group)

There is a lack of places for the middle class to go. To bring them out you need to know what will keep them coming. The drum socials always have a good turnout. What is bringing those people out? (Governance Focus Group)

There are however, events such as ImagiNATIVE, which draw the middle class into the community.

ImagiNATIVE is a good example of an event where Aboriginal people who never come out to anything else will come out to. Events like ImagiNATIVE are a big drawing feature. (Governance Focus Group)

One TARP focus group respondent further spoke to a previous effort to include middle class Aboriginal women in community life through the creation of an Aboriginal professional society:

A group of women formed PAWS, Professional Aboriginal Women's Society, and we did get a board set up. Rodney's wife Heather, she and I worked diligently to get a consensus model. We got a bit of funding from ONWA, but part of what was happening was that we had things set up, and it was quite well organized, but what could we offer to meet their needs? Even though we wanted input, we ended up doing the same things that other agencies were doing – sweats and having lunches. We had one dinner, and we had over 100 women attend. We were not in it for any money, but then we couldn't consistently attract people, so we tried all kinds of things to interest people, but we couldn't get that cohesiveness going. We worked on it for a year or so before we began to offer things. There are so many dividing lines between our people and one seemed to be that crushing poverty. (Governance Focus Group)

Another challenge to community cohesion identified by TARP respondents is that, aside from some concentrations in low-income neighbourhoods, Aboriginal residents tend to live in a diversity of areas across the GTA. As a result, Aboriginal agencies tend to be spread out across the city as well and there is a lack of a shared area or cohesive Aboriginal space in the city.

The urban migration of Aboriginal people into the City of Toronto is not the same as other cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon. The concentration of Aboriginal people has not happened in ways that it has for Chinatown, Little Italy, etc. We are spread out and there is no 'Native district'. As a result, you end up with people being integrated into the urban context. (Governance Focus Group)

Unless everyone is mobile, there is no way to build an Aboriginal community in Toronto. (Governance Focus Group)

When the Native Canadian Centre (NCC) was first formed, they had a small population of Aboriginal people. They were the first and oldest agency and many of our current agencies came out of the NCC. Many people remember growing there with their parents spending time there and there was a community. Now the agencies have spread out and there are many pockets of people. (Governance Focus Group)

A number (12%) of TARP respondents also identified the lack of government recognition as a challenge to urban Aboriginal self-government (Chart 15C). In particular respondents spoke of the importance of government recognizing TASSC as a community-based association that represents the majority of Aboriginal agencies in Toronto.

Historically, the federal and provincial governments have been reluctant to work with TASSC, such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, where you have to have representatives from the Provincial Territorial Organizations. At one point the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) seemed to be representing Toronto, but TASSC asserted itself and now the provincial government is looking at TASSC for representation instead of OFIFC. (Governance Focus Group)

A lot of discussion around governance and the right to self-government happened at TASSC board meetings and even though TASSC is not an elected body, its board members are elected from the community and this is important for its role as a community-based association. (Governance Focus Group)

And lastly, Chart 15C shows that a minority (10%) of respondents spoke of inter-agency competition as a challenge to community cohesion and the desire to come together politically towards Aboriginal self-government in Toronto. Respondents spoke specifically about the scarcity of resources in relation to unmet client needs and that lack of coordination in the government funding process fosters competition between the various Aboriginal agencies.

Chapter 16

THE ABORIGINAL ARTS COMMUNITY IN TORONTO

There is very little funding, so whenever there is money, you have all these organizations clawing at these small pots. They are guarding their own organizations. It is about organizational survival. The way the government provides funding facilitates the disconnection and competition for funding. When they put housing money on the table, only housing organizations should access that money. The same for youth, women, health, etc. The government is part of the problem. We only do housing because we would be cutting someone else's throat for taking other program money. (Governance Focus Group)

Community agencies have to be highly competitive. In order to access dollars, they have to broaden their service delivery as a matter of survival. It is a way of weeding out the weaker ones who get swallowed up by the bigger ones. (Governance Focus Group)

Agencies all have a specific segment that they look after and although we all know that it is important that we all help each other, everyone wants to guard their own program dollars. So we all hold our cards close to us and this fighting for funding diminishes our ability to come together as a community. (Governance Focus Group)

The arts can provide an important means not only to uplift spirits, but to understand the contemporary issues facing Aboriginal people and act as healing tool. (Arts Focus Group)

Summary of Key Points in the Chapter

- The Aboriginal arts community provides important public visibility of the presence of Aboriginal people in the city.
- The Aboriginal arts organizations face challenges in marketing to various segments of the population to ensure that the arts are accessible to everyone.
- Aboriginal social service agencies can be important collaborators and partners with the Aboriginal arts and such relationships require further growth and support.

Aboriginal arts are thriving in the City of Toronto. We can see Aboriginal arts in all corners of the city from visual art to performance theatre arts to film festivals. The arts community has grown from the efforts of many grassroots artists and patrons and has the potential to become a major cultural draw for the city. The importance of an arts and cultural life and cultural persistence is essential for Aboriginal people and positive identity development. We look to the arts not only for entertainment, but as a way to critically reflect upon our lived experiences and the experiences of others.

Several focus groups with Aboriginal artists were held along with informant interviews and life histories with Aboriginal artists, and specialized interviews as well as questions within the community sur-

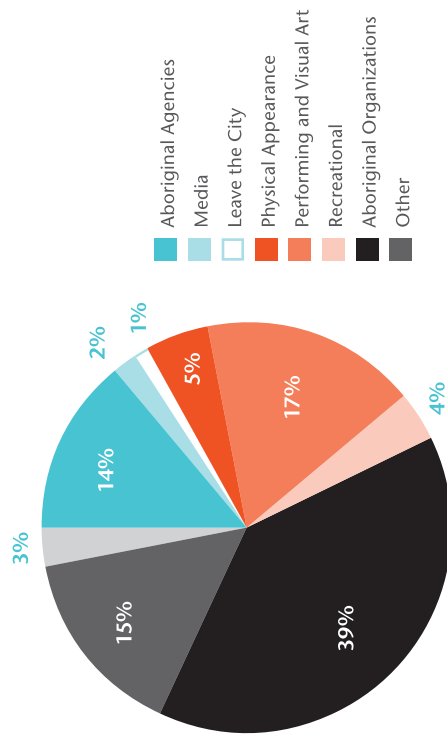
The data revealed a rich and diverse foundation of Aboriginal artists that was supportive of one another. This group of Aboriginal artists functions more or less in isolation from the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto as well as the Aboriginal social service sector. The research found several important themes which will be discussed in this chapter which include the visibility of Aboriginal people through the arts, the challenges of marketing Aboriginal arts to various segments in the population, working collaboratively with Aboriginal social service organizations and physical spaces for the Aboriginal arts.

16.1 Aboriginal Arts Organizations in the City of Toronto

The City of Toronto is home to many Aboriginal arts organizations. These have become the central mobilizers of Aboriginal artists, performances, productions, festivals and exhibits. The presence of artists, artisans and crafts people has been a long standing part of the Toronto Aboriginal community. Howard Bobiwash (2003) describes the role of women in particular in the 1960s in establishing a community of native craftspeople: “these women were particularly instrumental in the continuity and development of Native cultural pride, through education, social support, and the institution of an urban market for Native art and crafts, which supplied both financial and cultural support to the Native Centre and the community in Toronto.”¹⁸⁹

The continuity and development of cultural pride is evident by the Aboriginal community members in Toronto who see culture expressed through the arts. This is evident in the responses of the community survey which asked Aboriginal community members where they saw culture being expressed in Toronto as indicated in Chart 16A. Interview respondents saw Aboriginal culture being expressed mainly in Aboriginal organizations at 39%, although 17% saw it in the performing and visual arts. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents consider Aboriginal arts as contributing to urban Aboriginal community.

CHART 16A: Where is Aboriginal Culture Expressed in the GTA? (Qualitative n=110)



A large proportion (62%) of community survey respondents indicated that they had attended an Aboriginal arts event. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of community survey respondents indicated that they were active in the Aboriginal arts community. When respondents were asked what cultural based activities they participated in, they provided various responses. Aboriginal people in the GTA participated primarily in Aboriginal day celebrations (43%), feasts and social events (42%) and special events (32%). Community members indicated they primarily participated in visual art (19%), video or film (19%) theatre (17%) in terms of Aboriginal culture and arts events.

Aboriginal community members favour larger events such as Aboriginal day, powwows and socials. Despite the preference for cultural gatherings like feasts and powwows, the Aboriginal arts community has been thriving for several decades. The Aboriginal arts are supported by many organizations, such as Red Sky, Native Earth Performing Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Aboriginal Voices Radio, the Ontario College of Art and Design, ImagiNATIVE and the Association for Native Development the Performing Arts. All of these groups contribute in unique and various ways to the development of Aboriginal artists and the promotion of their visual, performing or media arts. The organizations also take

189 Bobiwash-Howard, H. (2003). Women's Class Struggles as Activism in Native Community Building, 1950-1975. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4), 566-582.

collaborative approach to much of their programming, not only with each other, but with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in Toronto, nationally and abroad. A brief description of these organizations and the important role they play in the vitality of the community is provided at the end of this chapter.

16.2 Major Themes for the Aboriginal Arts Community

Community members discussed some of the key opportunities and challenges facing the Aboriginal arts community in Toronto. This included the visibility of Aboriginal people through the arts, the challenges of marketing Aboriginal arts to various segments of the population, the Aboriginal arts as 'elite', working collaboratively with the Aboriginal social service organizations, and physical spaces for the Aboriginal arts. Funding for these organizations is typically sought from government or private arts funding bodies, and in the case of paid performances and the selling of artwork through art patrons. Each of these is described below.

16.2.1 Visibility of Aboriginal People through the Arts

Many urban centres have a distinctive Aboriginal presence seen most visibly through public art, buildings and cultural and art performances. Cities like Vancouver, Winnipeg and Saskatoon have obvious vibrant urban Aboriginal populations. Comparisons to the City of Vancouver were commonly made throughout interviews and Arts Focus Groups. The presence and influence of Aboriginal people on the development of the City of Vancouver are very obvious and an important draw for tourism and culture. Aboriginal artists noted that there was no such apparent Aboriginal presence in the City of Toronto. It is difficult for people interested in Aboriginal art to identify the central hub of activity. There is no single monument or sculpture that tells the local historical context of Aboriginal presence in the City of Toronto. One respondent stated:

When the arts come to the forefront then it can help with the social aspect. It is more visible, it's almost like a flag when the Aboriginal arts are more visible. (Focus Group)

Another respondent stated something similar about the role of arts in making the Aboriginal population a visible component of the population of the city:

It makes us visible. If it's music, theatre, dance or visual arts; those are things people see as an expression of a vibrant, living culture as opposed to something in the past that they see in a museum. If they know it's vibrant and alive...so many times people will come to a show at the Native Earth show, and they will say 'didn't know you guys existed, how long have you been around?' We say 26 years. (Arts Focus Group)

Aboriginal artists also discussed some of the nuances around attracting audiences who are interested in Aboriginal culture and issues, still maintaining 'authentic representations' of Aboriginal people. They discussed how when the performances highlight contemporary aspects of Aboriginal identity and culture, it is less well received. This is an important challenge that artists face in attempting to maintain artistic integrity, while still selling seats for performances. This is highlighted by one of the respondents:

Artistic expression in terms of cultural identity and creation, it's about challenging audiences because they want to see the feathers, the regalia and the leather and the suede. They don't believe that we have something to say outside of that, because that's what people are used to seeing. We do try to challenge that. When people say "oh it's not native enough", these are discussions which need to have more with non-Aboriginal audiences who say that kind of stuff, to continue dialogue, and to have those discussions without having them feeling defensive we don't get that opportunity enough. (Arts Focus Group)

As an artist it's like trying to get away from what people are expecting to see. I have surveys about these expectations at ImagINATIVE and pretty much what they tell us, is that it's not 'Native enough' because people come to ImagINATIVE looking for something that is stereotypically Aboriginal, whereas it's about expressing an identity as urban Aboriginal people. (Arts Focus Group)

This is an important challenge facing Aboriginal artists as they attempt to highlight contemporary realities and foster Aboriginal pride while also attempting to bring in newer audiences with conceived notions of Aboriginal authenticity. The visibility of

Aboriginal arts also provides a way to perpetuate opportunities for other funding. The increasing visibility will mean that funding agencies will identify Aboriginal people as a prominent population in the city, and will be more likely to fund them for different projects.

It also shows our funders, and it shows others that there's reason why we come out with this film festival and that we're here in the city, there's a lot of Indigenous people here in the city and we need arts organizations. (Arts Focus Group)

Without visibility of the Aboriginal presence to the larger urban community, it is difficult to market and promote Aboriginal arts events, exhibitions, festivals and productions. Further difficulties lie in the various 'types' of patrons of the Aboriginal arts. In some cases, economically successful Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal are seen as the main patrons for Aboriginal arts, however as the Aboriginal artists described, the arts are meaningful for people from all socioeconomic situations. The arts can provide an important means not only to uplift spirits, but to understand the contemporary issues facing Aboriginal people and act as a healing tool. Marketing to these different groups therefore can become a challenge.

16.2.2 Challenges of Marketing Aboriginal Arts to Various Segments of the Population

Several discussions were held on how to reach out to patrons, not only the mainstream population, but also the Aboriginal community of Toronto. Aboriginal artists discussed some of the complexity around marketing messages and formats for people who may occupy different socio-economic groups and may not be engaging with the same communication medium. This was expressed by a focus group respondent:

It's fair to say that we're really engaging at a level to entertain or to engage communication, but to advance our message we need to become priorities.

As artists, we have to be on their radar I think that we're getting there, we're advancing some, but there is still a long way to go. (Arts Focus Group)

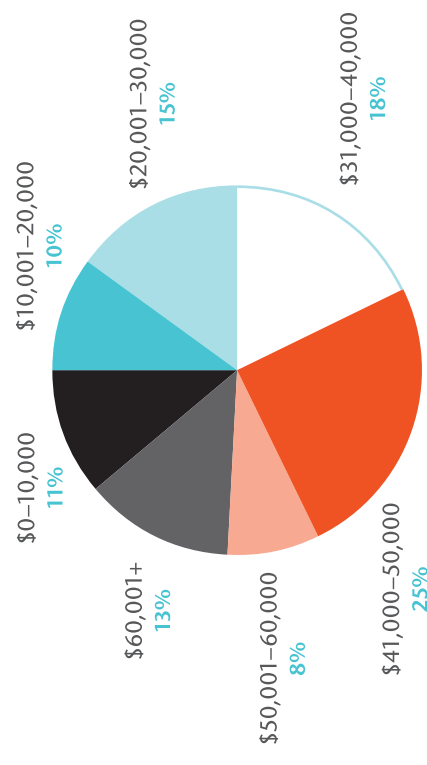
The Aboriginal artists also made use of social networking sites such as Facebook™ as a means to market their events. One of the focus group respondents stated that:

One thing I think is effective is the social networking world. It has changed the nature of involvement that can happen within the Aboriginal community. People are seeing through their friends, their nieces, their families, things that are happening within the city. Being connected to someone through Twitter™ My Space™, people are engaging in ways that they never did before. Those are mainstream people. (Arts Focus Group)

Social networking sites are indeed being utilized by Aboriginal people in the City of Toronto. The community survey results revealed 59% of respondents used social networking sites like Facebook™, Space™ and Twitter™ to communicate.

The data also revealed the distinctions between income levels the use of social networking sites, which is important in understanding different ways to engage with the Aboriginal community. Chart 16B reveals that of those who stated they did use social networking sites, the majority of those respondents had a total family income of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year. The higher income earning families were less likely to use social networking sites. However, the data revealed that only 17% of respondents had an income of over \$60,000 per year. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents indicated that they were in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year total family income. Of that income range, 43% of respondents utilized social networking sites.

CHART 16B Use of Social Networking by Total Family Income (Quantitative n=



Because of the amount of the Aboriginal community's high rates of participation in social networking, engaging the community in this way may be one multi-pronged approach to promote the Aboriginal arts in the City of Toronto.

The research participants discussed the importance of Aboriginal artists having business savvy which includes identifying potential patrons and clients, and promoting themselves in a way that is appropriately engaging. One respondent stated:

Artists need business skills, marketing skills, it's not just making the stuff, and they need to know the right outlets. They need that expertise. The Internet I am sure is quite explosive. (Arts Focus Group)

16.2.3 Aboriginal Arts as 'Elite'

One challenge the Aboriginal arts community contends with is the perception by community members that Aboriginal arts is reserved for the Aboriginal elites or the economically successful. The Aboriginal arts community contend that, in fact, participating in the artistic activities can be a form of healing and should not be seen as only reserved for certain Aboriginal community members. One respondent indicated:

It's all middle/upper class people who go see those shows and support it financially. Whereas a lot of our people are dealing with so many other social issues, economic issues that the arts are important to them but they are not necessarily having those conversations. (Arts Focus Group)

In order to reduce the reliance on government funding, it is important to have an established group of patrons who will support and promote the works of the artists and the arts organizations amongst their friends. One respondent discussed this:

Other theatre companies have their memberships or their patrons you know. It's all middle/upper class people who go see those shows and support it financially but there is also a board that's financially of the same upper echelon. (Arts Focus Group)

Although we are trying to garner support from the middle class, we only have that core group of artists who are being supported by this middle class group of people, but we have the largest population of Aboriginal people in Toronto and a lot of them are artists and they are not being recognized. I think that those are the

artists that just get left behind. As far as we are now with ImagINATIVE, how we going to engage the community? (Arts Focus Group)

One of the Arts Focus Groups discussed the need to engage with the with economic and political clout as a way to promote Aboriginal not only in Toronto but nationally. This is also a part of the discussion of the need for Aboriginal artists to begin focusing on the business development side of arts, rather than solely on artistic integrity spreading a message. This was described by one of the Arts Focus Group participants:

You have all of these senior people on boards who are, for whatever reason, very financially stable and that's how their message gets taken seriously, right? They can do whatever those other people are doing. (Arts Focus Group)

16.2.4 Working Collaboratively with the Aboriginal Social Service Organizations

There is a lack of consistent synergy between Aboriginal social service organizations and the Aboriginal arts community. Respondents discussed how difficult it is for Aboriginal artists to have financial stability and that many of them are actually accessing the social services in the city. The respondents made some distinctions between Aboriginal artists who are trying to connect with mainstream artists and then there are Aboriginal artists who are working in the social services who are staying within Aboriginal arts circles and not being connected to mainstream where there may be more opportunities for collaboration.

It's amazing and we support a huge roster of artists, at the same time we're talking Toronto. The majority of Toronto artists are probably mostly on social services or use the social services that are offered in Toronto. (Arts Focus Group)

There are some identified gaps between social service agencies and Aboriginal arts organizations. The respondents identified themselves as artists being:

...poor, they do face those issues like the social services are dealing with, local issues. They don't see the arts community answering, or contributing to, even though we actually do. We're just sort of one step back so that we have an ability to bring up these issues up and look at them. (Arts Focus Group)

The respondents felt that the Aboriginal arts community was an untapped resource and natural partner with social service agencies; however these agencies have shown little interest in partnering with Aboriginal arts organizations. One focus group respondent saw how the divisions between the arts and social service communities can arise:

It's interesting that it's a natural part of Indigenous peoples genetic to be creative and when you come to a place like Toronto, as we all know, it can really lie heavy on your spirit, the noise and the chaos and everything can really cloud creativity. It puts that divide even deeper between artists and the social service community; but they are also fighting for their funding trying to survive. (Arts Focus Group)

I think the coming together of social services to support the arts. That is where the leadership falls apart. For social services things, they have the ear of government and a lot of the power. (Arts Focus Group)

One respondent noted that one of the largest organizations, Native Child and Family Services (NCFS) has made significant strides in terms of incorporating the arts into their organization:

In NCFS, the building is designed by a native architect. There is a beautiful lodge inside the building. There is a council of Elders, who is allowing us to build a green roof with a sweat lodge. The iconography and symbolism in between the glass walls are Indigenous based. There are thick felt curtains made with beautiful patterns. They've asked me to come in and talk about the visual arts programming. They have seven generations. I am the only artist on NCFS, and I made a big point of saying that they are diminishing the arts in the community. And it is the most important thing that connects people to their culture, is through the arts. At NCFS, they are now establishing a committee on their arts programming, so they are stepping that up. (Arts Focus Group)

This perception by the Aboriginal artists that there is some disconnect between the Aboriginal arts community and Aboriginal social services is in contrast to some of the responses from the community survey. In fact, the community survey indicates that Aboriginal people in the City of Toronto see Aboriginal culture most represented in Aboriginal agencies (39%).

16.2.5 Physical Spaces for the Aboriginal Arts

Aboriginal artists flock to urban centres like the City of Toronto find creative outlets, opportunities to connect with other artists, to find employment opportunities that support them in their creative work. To support oneself entirely as an artist can be a challenge, artists often find themselves involved in multiple projects and working part-time to support their daily needs. One respondent made reference to Vancouver:

I would like to see some kind of native art centre like a gallery. That is one thing we don't have. In Vancouver there is an art gallery and it's gorgeous. We need to get something like that started here. (Arts Focus Group)

This is consistent with the opinions of the Aboriginal community. A community survey revealed that 96% of respondents indicated there was a need for an Aboriginal arts centre. This is an important link to the issues around the arts providing an important visibility to the Aboriginal population.

The focus group respondents discussed Thunderbird Centre which is the arts/business centre that is being planned. There have been some difficulties because there are multiple facets and considerations. Miziwe Biik Development Corporation is currently taking the lead in the development of this centre. A press release from Miziwe Biik in June 2010 described the role of the Thunderbird Centre:

The Thunderbird Centre's goal is to provide a centralized home for the Toronto Aboriginal arts and cultural community. With a mission to preserve, promote and protect Aboriginal culture, the Centre's vision is to build performance and studio spaces, galleries for Aboriginal artists and retail space for Aboriginal entrepreneurs. East, South, West and North will meet here to showcase and connect the very best of Indigenous arts and culture.

One of the Aboriginal artists describes some of the dialogue that has been taken place in regards to the development of a physical space like Thunderbird Centre:

Everyone wants it to be everything in Toronto; it makes it really complex as you can imagine. Because if you have a ceremonial room then you can't have the

dining lounge that sells alcohol, so there's all kinds of logistical things, but alcohol in a dining lounge makes money to facilitate and support the facility. It's very difficult but they're in their second or third phase they already have the land area secured, [the architect, the design] it would be down by the Distillery District you know where the Pan Am Games are going to be around that area. So you know it's tough because they are up against not only trying to keep everybody in the community happy. (Arts Focus Group)

What makes it difficult in this city, again it goes back to what we said earlier, is that everyone getting along and agreeing and supporting each other and part of it is systemic that everybody is, it's about survival mode, we are put in this competitive mode all the time, competitive with each other. Miziwe Biik on the other hand, can be the instigator of it, but I don't know if they understand the arts community enough. There's this other part of me that I think they think of it, just like people think of youth right? Oh this thing, we're going to do this with youth right? It's that tokenism, and that's devaluing and I challenge that with them all of the time but it's exhausting when you are challenging your own community. (Arts Focus Group)

The Thunderbird Centre is a creature of the Miziwe Biik Development Corporation. There is no physical space; however they provide a range of programs and services in support of Aboriginal arts. The Thunderbird Centre focuses on local, regional and international Aboriginal and Indigenous arts that range from contemporary to traditional. They are in the process of securing funds to have a building to house Aboriginal arts on a professional basis. In 2010, they had two events. The first was a production of Tomson Highway's *Kisageetin: A Cabaret*. The Thunderbird Centre held a second event called *Red Runners* which was a gallery show of various photographs of running shoes with various designs reflecting Aboriginal interpretations of reality. It was led by two interns at the Thunderbird Centre as the main curators.

Another artist describes the necessity of working spaces for Aboriginal artists, and the availability of space in the City of Toronto for the development of such a centre:

The space issue has come up over and over again in consultations. That has been formalized already, which is important why this research should be action-based. There are a few projects going on looking at space. Where Native Earth is, it would be nice if that was all Aboriginal focused. There are a lot of places that are not being used in the city. There's a huge space on the waterfront. There are two major buildings right in Harbourfront that were restaurants that are now empty.

Every time I go there, I see studios, performance space, and I keep thinking that there is already a public. I'm not into cultural tourism, but given Harbourfront these spaces, it's about prominence and visibility. I keep seeing Luke there; can and working for two years after he finishes school. It would be a good place to have a studio space so they can make enough money that they can rent their space. I think if we start simpler. There are empty buildings in the city, and we make good use of them. I don't know how to frame it to make it interesting for them. There are spaces that we could take over tomorrow. It would be a shame us to project five years in advance, because we need the space now. A place where you can gather and work: a painter doesn't need a big space. (Arts Focus Group)

The Aboriginal artists' community is generally supportive of idea being pursued by the Thunderbird Centre and Miziwe Development Corporation.

There are three plans right now for major centres. Those were sponsored by Miziwe Biik, led by Denise Bolduc, but that is being positioned as an Aboriginal entrepreneurial centre, but there was a lot of discussion about the needs of the community. There was discussion about the need to work, to have theatre space. That discussion is continuing, and they have Cardinal on board to build the building. (Arts Focus Group)

One artist describes some of the difficulties associated with the development of a centralized Aboriginal artist's/entrepreneurial centre:

As soon as they start community consultation, everyone starts to argue with each other and it falls apart. Issues come up like alcohol, and people wanting space recreational spaces. You need a strong leader in place. (Arts Focus Group)

The Thunderbird Centre has big plans for the City of Toronto. They are looking towards the 2015 Pan Am Games as a way to inject Aboriginal cultural programming as part of the games and provide some of 'cultural legacy' or 'footprint'. According to an interview with the Executive Director of the Thunderbird Centre, they are looking at a price tag of \$35 million for a building that will provide working spaces, visual arts gallery spaces, and performing arts space. They want to ensure that it is used to the maximum utility. If this physical space comes to fruition, there is a possibility that it will provide an important and much-needed opportunity for Aboriginal artists and Aboriginal organizations to gather and celebrate their identities and cultures all under one roof.

The Aboriginal arts in the City of Toronto are on the brink of some major infrastructural and organizational developments. With the continued success of events and organizations like ImagiNATIVE, Native Earth Performing Arts, the Centre for Indigenous Theatre, and many others, Aboriginal artists have built a supportive and cohesive community that is conducive to coordinating large scale efforts. The heightened capacity of the Aboriginal arts organizations to mobilize has resulted in an increased visibility of Aboriginal people as a vibrant urban population.

The Aboriginal arts community faces some challenges. One of the challenges discussed relates to reaching out and promoting events to different segments of the population. Some events may be perceived as elite, and others might be perceived as intended for clients of social service agencies. Aboriginal arts organizations must be strategic in how they develop their marketing and promotional materials so that all segments of the urban population, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal can get involved. This is closely linked to the perception that the Aboriginal arts are reserved for elite members of society, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Breaking this perception is important because the arts can be considered an important part of healing and positive identity development. Also connected is the need to work more collaboratively with the Aboriginal social service agencies and Aboriginal arts organizations and individual Aboriginal artists. While some Aboriginal arts organizations have had long standing collaborative relationships, others have struggled to break into these social service agencies.

Miziwe Biik Development Corporation's Thunderbird Centre is a recent development in providing services and programs for Aboriginal artists in the City of Toronto. They are currently in the process of attempting to secure funds and a location for an Aboriginal arts centre that is closely linked to Aboriginal entrepreneurialism. In the meantime, they are actively promoting the Aboriginal arts through theatre productions, gallery showings and art shows. The Thunderbird Centre, if an actual building materializes, has the potential to provide one of the most significant opportunities the City of Toronto has had for Aboriginal artists.

It is without a doubt that the Aboriginal artists in the City of Toronto have made, and continue to make, an indelible contribution to positive identity formation of Aboriginal people. As the organizations that continue to support the Aboriginal arts continue to thrive, impact will continue to be significant.

16.3 Aboriginal Arts Organizations in Toronto

Red Sky Performance is an arts company that specializes in dance, theatre and music. It was founded by Artistic Director Sandra Laronde in 2000, who is known as one of Canada's leading Aboriginal performers. Their performances include the creation, production and touring of contemporary Indigenous performances for adult and family audiences. Their work is focused on Aboriginal people in Canada as well as Indigenous people internationally. One of their most prominent performances included 'Tono' which toured in China and Inner Mongolia.

ImagiNATIVE, which was founded in 1998, is one of the most well-known Aboriginal artists venues in the City of Toronto. It is a four-day film and media festival that takes place in Toronto as well as an annual tour that takes place in remote Indigenous communities. It is an important event and organization because it is a multi-function way to connect film makers, media artists, programmers, buyers, industry professionals and patrons to the arts. ImagiNATIVE has received worldwide attention and is certainly considered a successful business model for promotion of Aboriginal arts.

One of the oldest professional Aboriginal theatre company's in Canada, **Native Earth Performing Arts** is a not-for-profit company that works to create and produce Native theatre and dance. Native Earth has a long history of participating in the development of a community of artists as well as the creation of several Aboriginal classics including the Rez Sisters, Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing, both by Tomson Highway, Someday by Drew Hayden Taylor and Moonlodge by Margo Kane. In 1989 they began developing an annual festival called the Weesageechak Festival, which focuses on the development of dance and theatre works such as Wawatay by Penny Gummerson and Annie Mae's Movement by Darrell Dennis. Native Earth Performing Arts is well known for its 2004-2005 production The Unnatural and Accidental Women by Marie Clemente. They are also recognized through many awards such as the Dora Mavor Moore Awards and the James Buller Award.

The City of Toronto has its own Aboriginal radio station, **Aboriginal Voices Radio** which was founded in 1998 by a group of high-profile Aboriginal people including actor Gary Farmer, playwright and author Tomson Highway, award-winning filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin and actress/producer Jennifer Podemski as well as multiple contributors such as Andre Morriseau, Brian Wright-McLeod, Elaine Bomberry, Sherman Manness and many others. AVR plays an important role not only in promoting Aboriginal music, but by providing important community information as well as interesting discussions from various perspectives on issues affecting Aboriginal people. They have stations in Ottawa, Calgary, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver.

The Ontario College of Art and Design plays an important role in the development and education of Aboriginal artists. Their Aboriginal Visual Cultural Program encompasses historical contemporary work by visual artists, designers, media artists, critics and curators through inter-disciplinary education in art, design and curatorial practice at the undergraduate, graduate and continuing education levels. OCAD takes a collaborative approach with Aboriginal communities, other post secondary institutions as well as individual Aboriginal scholars and artists.

Although available to all Ontario artists, **the Ontario Arts Council**, located in Toronto provides significant support to the development of Aboriginal arts in the GTA. The OAC has programs which support a wide range of Aboriginal artists in the province, and proposals are assessed by Aboriginal artists. The OAC supports artists through two main programs: the Aboriginal Arts Projects which supports professional Aboriginal artists, collectives, centres and councils who want to develop and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal communities, and the Aboriginal Arts Education Projects which supports Aboriginal artists who work with students, educators, youth, adults and communities that take place inside and outside the classroom which pass on traditional knowledge, skills and languages.

The Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts is Canada's oldest Indigenous arts service organization. They provide support to Canadian Indigenous artists in Ontario and around the world. In 1972, this organization was created as a non-profit organization spearheaded by James Howard Buller and other community members to become the voice of the Indigenous artists. Throughout the years, ANDPVA has provided significant opportunities for Aboriginal artists in training and workshops, communication, promotion and networking. They are an important component to the supportive Aboriginal arts community that many Aboriginal artists who were interviewed for this project discussed.

The Métis Artists Collective is another non-profit group of Aboriginal artists in Toronto. They are comprised of musicians, writers, filmmakers, dancers and visual and media artists. They have been presenting an annual Métis arts festival that showcases traditional and contemporary art forms such as Métis fiddling and jig visual art, new digital media, multi-media, film, television and performance arts.

The Centre for Indigenous Theatre is an education institution which provides training in the performing arts to Indigenous students. Their programs promote foster an understanding of Indigenous theatre through a three-year, post secondary conservatory program as well as introductory summer intensive programs.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aboriginal people have been residing in the Toronto area for centuries. Since the Second World War a major rural to urban shift has occurred throughout Canada and Aboriginal people have been part of it. The Toronto/GTA has been a major centre for Aboriginal people leaving First Nations and Métis communities to come in search of a better life.

The TARP study provides a description of the situation of Aboriginal people in Toronto/GTA. It is the largest and most complete research project ever conducted on the Aboriginal population in Toronto. Over 1,400 individuals participated in the study. Fourteen topics were examined utilizing six research methodologies. Importantly, the study employed a community-based approach that entailed representatives of the Aboriginal community in Toronto overseeing all aspects of the research. The Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Association (TASSC) sponsored the project and the TARP Steering Committee oversaw the research. A research team of 16 individuals conducted the research.

The picture painted by the study is one of a very diverse and complex community. The research suggests that, while a substantial number of individuals retain strong links to their community of origin, the majority have taken up long-term, stable residency in Toronto. For most, living in a city as large and multi-faceted as Toronto is a positive experience. There are numerous success stories and the number of people attaining success is growing. Levels of education are improving. The unemployment rate, while higher than for non-Aboriginal people, is declining. There are a substantial number of Aboriginal people who are enjoying economic success, moving to affluent regions of the GTA and forming a stable middle class. Like other urban residents,

they enjoy the recreational, entertainment and career opportunities afforded in a large multicultural city. They are participating in all benefits the city has to offer while, in many cases, attempting to maintain strong Aboriginal identities.

For many of these economically successful individuals, trying to create an Aboriginal community that relates to their aspirations and experiences is a challenge because of such factors as their geographic dispersion throughout the GTA, the lack of institutional capacity geared to their needs and divisiveness within the Aboriginal community.

At the same time, the research demonstrates that, for the majority of Aboriginal people residing in Toronto, achieving an economically viable existence is a serious challenge. Sixty-three percent (63%) of Toronto respondents earned less than \$40,000 annually.¹⁹⁰ For these individuals it is a continuing struggle to attain a satisfactory quality of life in the city. These issues have characterized a substantial proportion of urban Aboriginal people in urban areas across Canada for many years. The findings presented in this report demonstrate that problems such as poverty, the lack of affordable housing, homelessness, single-parent families, alcohol and drug addiction, school drop-out rates, racial unemployment, physical and mental health problems, family violence, high rates of incarceration and lack of support for Aboriginal culture and identity continue to face many Aboriginal people in Toronto.

A central goal of the research, therefore, is to present a balance between recognizing the needs of a significant number of Aboriginal people who are experiencing challenges in creating a successful life in the city, on the one hand, without painting an unhelpful negative representation suggesting that all Aboriginal people are poor and experiencing problems. It is important to adopt approaches to policy and program planning that have inherent in their intent and implementation an emphasis on the positive potential and empowerment of urban Aboriginal people rather than viewing them as 'victims' or 'social problems' that need to be 'solved' and recognizing the importance Aboriginal people place on understanding of their

¹⁹⁰ Similar rate of total family incomes were discovered in the five Ontario cities studied as part of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force.

history, cultures and distinct place in Canadian society. This requires an emphasis on the need for positive social change and building a healthy and sustainable urban Aboriginal community in Toronto. It is hoped that the TARP research will assist that objective.

A number of Aboriginal social service agencies were established in the 1980s and 90s in response to the growing social problems facing Aboriginal people moving to Toronto. In addition, a number of mainstream organizations provide programs and services to Aboriginal people. Various levels of government have provided substantial funding to these organizations. The research has demonstrated that these organizations, with government support, have had a positive impact on the lives of many Aboriginal clients over the years.

Yet, much remains to be done. There remain gaps in services to meet the continuing challenges facing Aboriginal people in Toronto. Respondents suggested there are unmet needs and room for improvement in a number of areas including:

- liaison between First Nations and Métis communities and urban agencies to assist in the initial adjustment of people moving to the city
- additional coordination of services among agencies
- the need to address the needs of high-risk groups, such as Aboriginal men with addictions, people with mental health issues, the homeless, those transitioning to a more stable lifestyle and two-spirited individuals
- additional social and cultural programs to strengthen Aboriginal culture as practiced in the city
- the lessening of the onerous administrative, fundraising and reporting requirements imposed on Aboriginal organizations by funders
- addressing the perennial issue of jurisdictional disputes among the levels of government as to who is responsible for urban Aboriginal people
- the need for increased 'partnerships' between governments and Aboriginal organizations
- the requirement of adequate, stable, long-term funding for services and programs

Therefore, a central theme of the research is that Aboriginal people in Toronto are working to create a viable and healthy urban community, a community based, to a large degree, on a unique expression of

urban Aboriginal culture. Respondents have stated that traces of community exist but that there is much work to be done. The research has discovered that there are a number of factors that are influencing the development of a viable and cohesive Aboriginal community. It can be argued that Aboriginal people in Toronto are in a 'transition' period of urbanization. That is, there are a number of recent phenomena that impact the nature of the Aboriginal population.

Earlier groups who migrated to the city came primarily from First Nations and brought with them specific Aboriginal cultures and values and attitudes. More recently there has been a new group of Aboriginal people emerging in the city. These 'new' Aboriginal people are individuals that have begun to identify themselves as Aboriginal based on a number of factors such as Indian Act Amendments, Bill C-31, Bill C-3 and the rise of Métis consciousness. Thousands of individuals have regained their Indian status or are now identifying as Métis across Canada. Many of these people live in urban centres. Statistics Canada refers to this phenomenon as 'ethnic mobility' or 'ethnic drifting' where people change the group they identify with often occurring later in life.

In addition, international Indigenous people who come to Toronto from other countries are also increasingly identifying themselves as Aboriginal and accessing services from Aboriginal agencies. The latter groups are culturally different from the first wave of urban migrants. Furthermore, other types of diversity now characterize Aboriginal people in Toronto including social class, First Nations/Métis, status, non-status, Bill C-31 reinstated status, mixed race, gender identification and culturally 'traditional' or contemporary.

Thus, the Aboriginal community in Toronto is more complex and diverse than in the past. This may, in the future, lead to feelings of resentment among older residents of Toronto as they might perceive the 'new' Aboriginal people as not 'authentically' Aboriginal. It might have important implications for defining an Aboriginal identity and the development of a cohesive Aboriginal community in Toronto. Research currently exists on some Aboriginal groups in Toronto and there are seven topics which are seriously under-researched; child

and youth, men, Elders and seniors, two-spirited individuals, law and justice, culture and identity and the middle class, for which there is little in-depth understanding.

The issue of developing some form of representative urban Aboriginal self-government was raised by many respondents who desired a greater degree of control over their own affairs. At the same time, there was some degree of uncertainty about the meaning of self-government in urban centres and whether there was sufficient capacity or sense of a coherent community to make any meaningful governance structure feasible, especially given past failed attempts.

It is hoped that the TARP research can assist in this endeavour through providing empirical substantiation of the aspirations of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Good policy and program planning is based on empirical evidence.

The remainder of this chapter provides a number of conclusions based on an analysis of the findings of the research and makes a number of recommendations with a view to addressing the issues facing Aboriginal people. Overall, the recommendations are meant to contribute to the 'wellness' among Aboriginal people in Toronto through socio-economic enhancement, cultural initiatives and governance. The recommendations emerge from the ideas presented by participants in the study. It is organized according to the topics of the research.

17.1 Aboriginal Children and Youth

The youth represent the future of any group. The Toronto Aboriginal population is young and growing. There has been some success in improving levels of education among Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal youth have made many positive contributions to the Toronto Aboriginal community. The research findings present a picture of Aboriginal youth in Toronto at a crossroads. On the one hand, youth have articulated a sentiment to connect to their Aboriginal culture through a desire to learn from Elders and traditional people to learn about cultural teachings and ceremonies. In some cases, they are attempting to lead a revitalization of the culture. Youth can play an important role

in traditional culture through being 'Shkaabewis' or helpers as we drummers, dancers, volunteers at events, cooks and craft makers.

On the other hand, youth are engaging in all the activities and behaviours of mainstream youth including being computer savvy, engaging in social media, playing video games, watching TV and hanging with friends. These social media activities might be a new means to encourage youth to connect with Aboriginal culture and community members and events. Encouraging the connection between Aboriginal youth and online Aboriginal language and cultural communities should also be encouraged as part of their education and cultural training.

Aboriginal families, children and youth are under significant stress as a result of poverty, poor parenting skills, lack of positive role models and alcohol addiction and single parent families. In order to support single Aboriginal parents to access employment and training opportunities so as to better support themselves and their families, they need better access to subsidized, culturally-based childcare services. This will entail giving priority to Aboriginal families presently on the Toronto subsidy waiting list, including transportation expenses with the subsidy, and amending the approval criteria to better accommodate the complex challenges that Aboriginal people are facing.

Finding employment was a great concern expressed by Aboriginal youth. Also, keeping youth off the streets was a stated goal. Further, like the Aboriginal middle class generally, there was an articulated desire from youth from economically successful families for additional programs and services to meet their specific needs such as cultural-educational opportunities, additional recreational facilities and a greater voice in the affairs of the Aboriginal community.

A worrying trend articulated by respondents is the potential of gang activity among Aboriginal youth, with 63.4% of the sample citing this as a concern. The rise of gang activity is often the result of a loss of a sense of family and overall alienation. Gangs can fill the role of a sense of community, belonging and identity. A well established gang culture already exists among some racial groups in Toronto. Therefore, there is a risk that if youth concerns are not addressed, gang involvement will increase.

There are currently a number of youth programs in existence in many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies, primarily geared to children and youth with problems. For example, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training program delivered a six- month Skills Link program targeted to Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 30 from September, 2010 to March, 2011. The purpose of the program was to ensure that 15 Aboriginal participants gain the skills, knowledge and work experience to become employed on a full-time basis. The youth spoke about their appreciation and the effectiveness of those programs but stressed the need for better outreach, communication and cooperation among agencies. They stated that there was a need for a 'hub' for youth activities centrally located because transportation to the scattered programs and activities was a problem in terms of access. The research has articulated a number of gaps in programs and services pertaining to Aboriginal children and youth including the need for adequate housing, additional recreational facilities, specialized cultural educational opportunities, youth-Elders programs, additional recreational facilities, sports leagues and activities and an opportunity for the youth voice to be more effectively heard.

Recommendations

- 1 That the City of Toronto give priority for Aboriginal Families in the subsidy system to allow for access to culturally specific Aboriginal childcare spaces
- 2 That the City of Toronto builds the cost of transportation supports into the development of programs related to Aboriginal children and families, such as Little Voices Child and Family Centres and Childcares.
- 3 That the City of Toronto enter into discussions with the Province of Ontario and the Federal Government (Health Canada) to look at building a demonstration site where relationships can be nurtured to include 'successful practices' in sharing the resources, relationships between Aboriginal Head Start, Pathways, Provincial Children and Youth Services and the City of Toronto's Children Services.
- 4 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies providing children and youth programs and activities get together to better coordinate their services including creating a body of agency staff working in youth programs to coordinate and establish a central facility that can act as a 'hub' where children and youth can go to access services.

- 5 That a number of youth-Elders programs be established to bring these two groups together for traditional cultural and language teaching, including learning to be helpers and assuming appropriate attitudes and behaviours thus providing youth with a sense of Aboriginal identity and training a new generation to take their place in the Aboriginal community in a positive way
- 6 That the Toronto District School Board consider establishing an 'Aboriginal school' located outside the downtown area at the intermediate and second level modeled after the Afro-centric school. The school could include an Aboriginal language immersion component. Such a school would be separate from the First Nation School currently operating in Toronto.
- 7 That an Aboriginal agency establish a dedicated employment and career preparation course similar to the 'Skills Link' program provided by Miziwe Aboriginal Employment & Training to assist Aboriginal youth to attain the skills and experience to enter employment. A mentoring program involving successful Aboriginal people from all walks of life could be part of the training. Also, practicum field placements, internships or co-op placement should be included to give trainees experience with real life work situation
- 8 That an apprenticeship program be developed involving the private sector and labour unions to train Aboriginal youth in specific trades and employment.
- 9 That a 'transitional' housing program be established to house youth who move to Toronto without their parents or family to keep them from living on the street and assist them in adjusting to life in Toronto including refer help in finding permanent housing, employment counselling and cultural teachings.
- 10 That Aboriginal athletic leagues be organized throughout the GTA in various sports to engage youth in positive recreational activities.
- 11 That a permanent 'Aboriginal Youth Council' be established to 'give voice' to the concerns of Aboriginal youth in the city. It could be housed in an existing Aboriginal agency or in the Toronto Aboriginal Cultural Centre (see Recommendation # 42) and should receive sufficient funding to conduct their activities.
- 12 That a research study be undertaken on the topic of Aboriginal children and youth with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of their situation and needs.

17.2 Aboriginal Men

The TARP research discovered that, despite the fact that a substantial number of Aboriginal men are experiencing significant educational and employment success, the majority of men in Toronto were being 'left behind', especially compared to Aboriginal women, in terms of programs and services. Aboriginal men tend to have the lowest incomes, highest unemployment rates, lowest educational attainment levels, least job security, be at the greatest risk of being homeless and are least likely to own a home. Aboriginal men appear to have been particularly hard hit by the after effects of residential schools, colonialism, the 'sixties scoop', living in foster homes, becoming CAS crown wards and other ills suffered by Aboriginal people. In many cases, respondents reported that Aboriginal men were unwilling to admit they have a problem and seek assistance. The result has often been addictions, anger turned inward and overrepresentation in the correctional system.

In many cases, Aboriginal men are also experiencing relationship problems. The majority of Aboriginal men in the sample (68%) were single, divorced or separated. Often not being raised in a stable family situation, Aboriginal men frequently do not possess the knowledge or emotional stability to engage in a positive caring relationship. Traditionally, men played the role of provider and protector in the family but increasingly those tasks are being taken by women. For some women marrying an Aboriginal man experiencing personal problems was not a desirable option and they were looking elsewhere for relationships. Conversely, there is a minority of single parent men who experience difficulties in accessing services for their families.

There is clearly a need for a culturally-based Aboriginal residential addiction treatment and detox facility in Toronto. The closure of Pedahbun Lodge a few years ago has left a major gap. Perhaps the most important recommendation of the TARP research is to re-establish such a facility to meet such a pressing need.

Recommendations

- 13 That a culturally-based residential treatment and detox centre be established in Toronto to meet the needs of Aboriginal men who are experiencing drug and alcohol addiction issues.
- 14 That culturally-based Aboriginal healing programs be set up focusing on issues that affect Aboriginal men such as relationship counselling, life skills, anger management, parenting skill and addictions treatment.
- 15 That a research project be undertaken to examine the situation of Aboriginal men in Toronto.

17.3 Aboriginal Women

As with most of the groups studied in the research, Aboriginal women in Toronto fall into two broad categories, those who are economically successful who are professionals, work in Aboriginal organizations are part of the Aboriginal middle class. On the other end of the socioeconomic scale, are those women who face significant challenges such as poverty, unstable relationships, single parent families, inadequate housing, discrimination and addictions. Aboriginal women in Toronto are employed in various occupations but the majority earns less than \$40,000 annually. There are also a large number of women who are single mothers and who face significant challenges raising their children because of poverty and lack of support. Some are involved with child welfare agencies causing stress for both mothers and children. Stable housing is often beyond the reach of many Aboriginal women. Some Aboriginal women experience relationship issues such as domestic violence and attempting to find a stable partner. Discrimination was also a problem for many Aboriginal women. There are programs and activities such as Anduhyuan Women's Shelter and the Native Women's Resource Centre, geared toward assisting Aboriginal women facing these challenges.

At the same time, Aboriginal women also play important leadership roles in the Toronto Aboriginal community. They are often active members of the Board of Directors of Aboriginal organizations, act as volunteers

community events, are activists for Aboriginal causes and are healers in the community. In many ways, women are the ‘glue’ that keeps the Aboriginal community together.

Recommendations

- 16 That mentorship programs between Aboriginal women experiencing financial success and those experiencing challenges be developed to assist women in building networks of support and role models as well as providing successful Aboriginal women with a community connection.
- 17 That an ‘acknowledgement award program’ honouring Aboriginal women who contribute to the community – similar to YWCA Women of Distinction Awards – be established. This could be done to highlight women who contribute in various ways – through volunteering, education sector, health sector, youth and Elders.
- 18 That women employed in Aboriginal agencies, government, and the private sector create an ‘Aboriginal Professional Women’s Association’ to represent the interests of Aboriginal women and hold activities and events.

17.4 Aboriginal Elders and Seniors

Aboriginal Elders (individuals that have attained insight, wisdom and authority) and seniors (older Aboriginal people) have traditionally played an important role in Aboriginal society. The former often possess special cultural and spiritual knowledge and are responsible for passing on Aboriginal teachings to future generations. Traditionally, they also conduct ceremonies, provide guidance to individuals and were often called upon to assist in making decisions in the community. Elders and seniors were also central caregivers in extended families often playing a central role in the socialization of children.

The research has shown that, unfortunately, Elders and seniors are, to a large degree, unable to meaningfully engage in their traditional roles in the urban environment. Most were experiencing poverty and were living alone in rented accommodation. They indicated that they often experienced feelings of loneliness and social isolation, which they reported as the most important issue they faced living in Toronto. Like other groups in the research, lack of transportation services was

a major challenge as well as lack of assisted living services, a shortage of senior housing and family or peer support. The loneliness was compounded by the lack of programs and activities and physical fitness facilities for seniors.

Almost all Aboriginal organizations involve Elders and traditional people in a variety of capacities. They often are asked to open close meetings in a traditional manner, provide ‘talking circles’ to provide cultural teachings, teach Aboriginal language classes and conduct spiritual ceremonies. But respondents reported that these activities were not sufficient to allow for an in-depth or comprehensive passing on of the traditional culture, especially to the youth. They suggested there is a pressing need to socialize youth into the morals, values and behaviour of becoming a healthy contributing member of the urban Aboriginal community. A member of society fully grounded in traditional teachings, ceremonies and language of their Aboriginal group. They suggest that many of the issues faced by urban Aboriginal youth are the result of not having a strong, positive sense of self as an Aboriginal person. Thus, it is important that efforts be made to facilitate Elder-youth interaction on an ongoing basis to develop a healthy Aboriginal identity in Aboriginal youth. A ‘gathering place’ designed to facilitate youth and Elders and seniors conducting activities together is needed. In addition, Elders should be adequately compensated for the work that they do.

It is intolerable that the most respected group within Aboriginal society suffer from isolation, poor housing and lack of programs. There is a vital need for a seniors housing facility in Toronto where Elders and seniors can live, participate in programs and activities and socialize with members of the larger Aboriginal community. It should be located near public transportation routes.

There should also be a concerted effort to integrate Elders and seniors in community work such as becoming members of Boards of Directors in Aboriginal organizations, volunteers at community events, providing teachings and counselling to individuals, being public speakers to community groups and schools and conducting ceremonies. There must be additional financial resources available for Elders and seniors to take their rightful place in the Toronto Aboriginal community.

Recommendations

- 19** That an Aboriginal seniors long-term residential care facility be established in Toronto, modeled on the recently opened facility in Winnipeg. The facility should ensure that Elders and seniors are afforded the opportunity to interact with other generations of the Aboriginal community, especially youth. The facilities should provide accommodation and services for seniors in a variety of circumstances, including independent living, and enhanced care for those of different health circumstances and disabilities.
- 20** That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that work with Aboriginal people establish programs and activities that involve Aboriginal Elders in an official capacity with appropriate financial compensation.
- 21** That Aboriginal organizations and non-Aboriginal organizations that work with Aboriginal youth establish programs where Elders interact with youth on an on-going basis to teach the traditional culture and language, including teaching youth to assume their role of 'Shkaabewis' (helpers) and performing ceremonies such as fasting, sweat lodges and other traditional socialization practices to provide them with a solid positive Aboriginal identity.
- 22** That special transportation subsidies and programs be established to facilitate Elders and seniors ability to be mobile within the city.

17.5 The Aboriginal Two-Spirited Community in Toronto

The Aboriginal two-spirited community represents a 'special' group in that it is larger than in any other city in Ontario and tends to be forgotten in discussions about urban Aboriginal people. In addition, there are distinct sub-groups within the community including middle class two-spirited people, those involved in specific endeavours such as the arts and media, those experiencing 'double' discrimination being Aboriginal and two-spirited, as well as those experiencing the challenges of being transgendered and the problems encountered by HIV positive people. Despite the overall tolerance of people in Toronto toward gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered people, homophobia and discrimination in both mainstream and Aboriginal communities is a burden two-spirited people frequently have to bear. Transgendered and HIV positive individuals face special issues of safety and health concerns. For transgendered people there are major sections of the

city outside the downtown core that are 'off limits' because of risk of violent homophobic occurrences. Two-spirited people require a safe, supportive community composed of like-minded individuals.

The 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization is designed to meet the needs of HIV positive people but it is limited in its mandate space and resources. There is clearly a need for additional programs and supports, including appropriate facilities, that are culturally and gender sensitive. There is also a need for additional research to gain more complete understanding of this unique group.

Recommendations

- 23** That a safe 'transition' house be established in or near downtown Toronto where two-spirited people moving from rural communities can live during their initial adjustment to the city. It would have a mandate to help access programs and services such as housing, employment, transportation, etc. to prevent individuals from living on the street or becoming involved with the sex trade. It would also serve to connect them with Aboriginal cultural and appropriate gender activities.
- 24** That either through an expansion of the mandate and facilities of the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, or a new organization, a 'two-spirited gathering place' be created to serve the social, cultural and recreational needs of Aboriginal two-spirited people in Toronto. The multi-use space could be used for a variety of programs and activities such as computer access, feasts and socials, drumming, traditional teachings, youth programs, seniors' events, movie nights, kitchen facilities, etc. Its programs should be sufficient to appeal to middle class two-spirited people as well as individuals experiencing problems.
- 25** That a 'two-spirit house' be established for HIV positive two-spirited people or near downtown Toronto, as well as for families of two-spirited individuals experiencing health problems.
- 26** That the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization receive funding for an additional long-term case management worker to allow the agency to more effectively meet the needs of their clients.
- 27** That the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organization be given funding to increase its work related to two-spirited 'awareness training' for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that serve two-spirited individuals, including Elders and traditional people, with a view to facilitate sensitivity and acceptance and the increase in use of these organizations by two-spirited

individuals. Further, the training should lead to the development of an effective and enforceable 'non-discrimination' policy and practices related to two-spirited people. In addition, increased supports should be made available for two-spirited students in high schools and post-secondary institutions. The awareness training should cast a wide net to a variety of organizations including First Nations Band Councils and band members.

28 That Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto make an effort to include two-spirited members on the Community councils to ensure that they are sensitive to issues of two-spirited individuals who come before them.

29 That a comprehensive research project be undertaken focusing on gaining a greater understanding of the issues and concerns of the two-spirited community including the middle class, transgendered and HIV positive individuals. The study could include an examination of the relationship between First Nations and Métis communities and the city regarding two-spirit issues.

17.6 Aboriginal Poverty and Social Services

The research discovered that poverty is an overarching issue facing a significant number of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Indeed, there is a temptation to say that poverty is a defining feature of the Aboriginal community in Toronto, with 63% of the TARP earning less than \$40,000 per year (with the City of Toronto poverty line at about \$37,000 annually). It would be a mistake, however, to characterize the community in that way. There already exists a stereotype of urban Aboriginal people as 'victims', dependent on government funding and social services. Visible signs of poverty such as a disproportionately large number of homeless Aboriginal people on the streets and media stories focusing on the problems faced by Aboriginal people tend to reinforce the negative image. A more positive approach is examining ways to create positive social change, focusing on building a healthy urban Aboriginal community and empowering people to improve their lives rather than viewing them as in a position of 'social deficit'.

Many of the people currently experiencing poverty grew up poor so breaking the cycle is particularly challenging. In addition, poverty is multi-faceted and is inter-related with many factors such as lack of employment (and lack of education and training to qualify for employment), unstable housing, lack of life skills, unstable family situations, health problems, racism and substance abuse. It is obvious

that developing services to address the myriad of needs of these people to break the cycle of poverty will be difficult. A culturally-based, holistic, seamless integrated service delivery mechanism that deals with the whole person, focusing on both short and long term change is most effective. Ideally, for new urban migrants the process should start before the individual comes to Toronto which would entail coordination between First Nation and Métis organizations and urban agencies.

Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies are in existence to meet these needs. An issue that respondents reported that, at times, inhibited the seamless delivery of services was the lack of coordination among social service agencies, especially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. This is understandable given the different mandates of the agencies and need to follow the funding priorities of government. Furthermore, the client numbers of agencies have increased, in part because of the 'new' Aboriginal people who have recently identified as Aboriginal and are now utilizing the services of Aboriginal organizations. This includes groups like international Indigenous people, people from mixed-race relationships, 'Bill C-31' First Nations people, Métis and the increasing number of non-status Indians. Aboriginal agencies tend to be 'status blind', that is, they will provide services to anyone who self identifies as Aboriginal thus adding to their workloads.

The research also discovered that Aboriginal people tend to prefer receiving services from Aboriginal organizations. They feel more comfortable being with their own people who understand where they are coming from. Also, receiving 'culturally-based' services is important to clients. An added dimension for Aboriginal agencies is that they are accountable to the larger Aboriginal community.

In order to meet the challenges of providing services to this difficult-to-serve population, Aboriginal agencies frequently believe that they require additional resources. Many clients of Aboriginal agencies have 'multiple problems' such as physical and mental health issues as well as poverty, unstable housing, single parent families and addiction. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Colleges, University and Training recognize the fact that educating Aboriginal students, and their special circumstance, is more costly than educating non-Aboriginal students and allocate extra funding accordingly.

There was also concern expressed regarding the onerous administrative requirements of funders including the need to report frequently and the constant need to raise funds to operate programs. One Aboriginal agency has over 70 program contracts with funders. Also, the lack of long-term core funding which is necessary for organizational stability is a perennial issue with many Aboriginal institutions.

One way to address these issues is to have Aboriginal service agencies set up offices throughout the city that are best able to direct Aboriginal community members to appropriate services and organizations. The Canadian government has done this with their 'Service Canada' offices, a kind of 'one-stop shop', where people can get information on all government services. This could be a cost sharing arrangement amongst organizations with a focus on ensuring there is an adequate flow of information among organizations. As well, this facility could include an electronic format with a web presence. It is important for these offices to be located on a public transportation route.

Currently, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto produces a newspaper for their members. In viewing Aboriginal organization websites, some organizations have very recently updated websites with information on upcoming programs, services and events, while others have limited updates. A cohesive effort to either streamline information on the Internet or ensure that Aboriginal organizations have an integrated web presence is important in attracting clients and community members who are web-savvy. While this may not be helpful for community members who do not have access to the Internet, for others, it would make these organizations more accessible.

Recommendations

30 That Aboriginal agencies in Toronto contact their counterparts in First Nations and Métis organizations to establish a system of communications regarding individuals expressing an interest in coming to the city in order that they are aware of services offered and that initial contacts can be made when they first move to the city, thus providing them with a positive initial urban experience. Similarly, continued contact between First Nations and Métis groups and urban agencies could continue to facilitate the movement of individuals moving back and forth between the city and community of origin.

31 That Aboriginal and mainstream agencies cooperate to establish partnership in the form of a body with a mandate to offer seamless and holistic continuing care to Aboriginal clients. This might include a coordinated system of registration of clients common to different agencies to better coordinate services to individuals. Such a system could allow for 'tracing' an individual they receive services at different stages of their urbanization experience.

32 That, in recognition of the frequent case that many Aboriginal clients face 'multiple problems', extra funding be allocated to Aboriginal social service agencies to meet these special circumstances.

33 That negotiations be initiated between governments and Aboriginal organizations to look for ways of reducing the onerous reporting requirements for Aboriginal agencies and examine ways to provide stable long-term core funding for Aboriginal organizations.

34 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies develop multi-organizational satellite offices as 'one-stop shops' with a number of coordinated services programs offered to better meet the needs of Aboriginal clients.

35 That Aboriginal organizations develop a cohesive Internet presence which provides streamlined, up-to-date, accurate information on programs and services. This will require a dedicated staff to ensure the information shared is accurate. It will also provide an outlet for those considering moving to Toronto with information to prepare them for the reality of urban life.

17.7 The Aboriginal Middle Class in Toronto

The research demonstrates that there is a large and growing Aboriginal middle class in Toronto. They are individuals who have attained economic success, high levels of education, reside throughout the city and participate in all the amenities that a large cosmopolitan city has to offer. Some are part of the 'new wave' of urban Aboriginal people who have recently come to identify as Aboriginal due to social factors as; Bill C-31, Bill C-3, mixed-race marriages and the rise of Métis consciousness. They are not well organized as a coherent social community. There is also a lack of capacity in this group in terms of Aboriginal organizations specifically geared to represent their interests. In many cases, there is a desire to participate in cultural programming and activities in the larger Toronto Aboriginal community, but a reluctance to become involved in social service-type organizations which do not meet their needs. Many are involved with the larger Aboriginal community, for example as members of Boards of Directors; many

not involved. Many attend cultural events such as powwows, National Aboriginal Day celebrations and Aboriginal arts and film festivals. Some have aspirations to send their children to Aboriginal schools and camps that cater to their requirements.

The research also uncovered a significant amount of 'lateral violence' against the Aboriginal middle class by other members of the Aboriginal community. The issue of lack of organizations that relate to the cultural, social and recreational needs of middle class individuals coupled with the divisiveness within the Aboriginal community has led to real danger that economically successful people will leave the Aboriginal community.

This has significant implications for the formation of a strong cohesive Aboriginal community in Toronto. Therefore, it is important that facilities and activities be developed to help them to retain their culture and identity and integrate into the larger Aboriginal community in Toronto.

The majority of respondents articulated the need for some form of cultural education centre that would serve multiple functions including acting as a 'gathering place' where people could socialize, a facility to hold cultural and social events and ceremonies, a place to hold art and cultural exhibits, an educational resource to teach Aboriginal language and culture, a library, a museum, a day care, a recreational facility for fitness and sports and a place for youth-Elders programs. There is a strong tradition of volunteerism among urban Aboriginal people to help organize the creation of such a centre. Currently there are individuals with strong organizational skills to engage in fundraising and organizing the facility as well as people with sufficient economic resources and networks to contribute funds to build it. Government and corporate funding could also be sought.

Recommendations

36 That a group of Aboriginal people convene a meeting to discuss the desirability of establishing a cultural education centre in Toronto. If there is agreement, then a non-profit society should form to conduct a needs assessment to determine the specific nature of the facility. A Building Fund could be

established to solicit donations from the Aboriginal community, government and the private sector. The process of fundraising and operation of the centre should be under the sponsorship of a new Aboriginal organization.

37 That Aboriginal and mainstream organizations make a special effort to attract members of the Aboriginal middle class who are currently not connected to the Toronto Aboriginal community with a view to get them to actively participate in programs and activities.

38 That a research project be initiated to examine the specific nature of the Aboriginal middle class in Toronto with a view to more adequately understand their needs, explore ways to enhance their culture and identity in the city and determine ways to involve them more in the larger Toronto Aboriginal community.

17. 8 Housing in the Toronto Aboriginal Community

The issue of housing has been a long-standing issue for Aboriginal people in Toronto. Urban housing programs geared specifically for Aboriginal people, as well as the mainstream population have been in place for many years. However, it is clear that there is a high demand for social housing that is available. Aboriginal organizations such as Nishnawbe Homes, Gabriel Dumont Housing and Miziwe are examples of organizations attempting to creatively respond to demand for housing through partnerships and collaboration.

The research has demonstrated that housing provides a key foundation for the success of Aboriginal people. Without a stable housing situation, all other aspects of life remain unstable and difficult to manage. Therefore, careful attention to the needs of Aboriginal people, specifically single parents, two-spirited people, those living in extended family situations and those in transition from the street to incarceration or treatment centres is important in filling current gaps. Otherwise, community members can become vulnerable to negative behaviours such as addictions or finding themselves dealing with Children's Aid Society.

Recommendations

39 That Aboriginal housing organizations work with mainstream social housing organizations to develop housing policies and regulations that are culturally reflective of Aboriginal people and family structure (i.e. extended family) with a view to expanding the amount of social housing available to Aboriginal people in Toronto.

40 That a housing program be established for Aboriginal individuals transitioning from shelters or recovery treatment facilities. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing agencies should work together to create this program.

17.9 Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto

The TARP research with homeless Aboriginal people was a 'study within a study' which involved interviewing 140 homeless individuals, three focus groups, three life histories and a photovoice project with street involved Aboriginal youth. A disproportionately large number of homeless people in Toronto are Aboriginal, mostly men. The research demonstrates that this group faces some of the most serious social problems of any Aboriginal group in Toronto, including substance abuse, poor physical and mental health, an unstable housing situation and lack of employment. For this group obtaining even the most basic necessities of life is a challenge. Homeless participants stated that even transportation to get to services was a major problem. Many have experienced dysfunctional family lives growing up with heavy involvement with foster homes and conflicts with the law.

Substance abuse is a major problem for this group and there was a near unanimous recognition for an Aboriginal addictions and detox facility in Toronto (see Recommendation #13). Also obtaining any form of stable housing was cited as a huge problem with long waiting lists to get into social housing and frequent disqualification for being admitted because of substance abuse problems. Many were forced to reside in shelters or on the streets. Lack of qualifications for employment as a result of factors such as low levels of education and training was also frequently mentioned as an issue for homeless people.

Some Aboriginal organizations, including Na-Me-Res, Coum Fire, Anishnawbe Health, Native Child and Family Services, Na Women's Resource Centre and Miziwe Biik, were viewed as helpful for homeless people in terms of providing shelter, food, counselling, medical services and education and training.

Recommendations

41 That social service agencies review their policies and regulations regarding providing assistance for transportation with a view to making it easier for clients to effectively access transportation services in Toronto.

42 That Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies, the private sector, labour unions and educational institutions work together to create employment incentives upgrading, apprentice and special education and training programs focus specifically on the education and training needs of Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto. In addition, that mainstream shelters in the downtown core that support Aboriginal people who face challenges with homelessness offer culturally-appropriate services and supports.

43 The governments establish a transitional housing program specifically geared to the needs of Aboriginal homeless people, including culturally-based services relating to addictions, counselling, cultural teachings, transportation assistance, employment preparation and life skills training.

17.10 Aboriginal Culture and Identity in Toronto

Urban Aboriginal identity is complex and nuanced and very difficult to empirically quantify. It involves complex processes pertaining to how one self-identifies (e.g. sense of self, family background, personality, socialization experiences, etc.) as well as how members of a larger society perceive them (e.g. positive or negative stereotypes, media images, effects of residential schools and colonization, etc.). An individual's identity is about 'meaning' and is formed and maintained as a social process of interaction with others. Identities are both individually unique and collectively shared. Further, individuals have multiple identities based on such factors as race, gender,

social class, occupation, nationality, etc. and can change over time. Therefore, defining oneself as an Aboriginal person in a complex urban centre like Toronto where individuals are involved in numerous roles can be challenging. Some people consider that a connection to a 'traditional' Aboriginal culture is fundamental to an individual's identity. This sometimes entails a relationship to the land, knowledge of an Aboriginal language, understanding of traditional teachings and participation in cultural ceremonies. Others speak of the idea of Aboriginal 'blood memory' as a biological component of an individual's ancestry regardless of their connection to traditional culture. While the research demonstrates that a significant number of people retain connections to their community of origin for cultural maintenance purposes; for others living in the city this is not a viable option.

For the vast majority of the TARP respondents, their identity as an Aboriginal person is central to their sense of who they are. Thus, for many urban Aboriginal people in Toronto other 'markers' of identity are important. Some respondents suggested that the values and attitudes as well as how you live your life are critical to your Aboriginal identity. Values of caring, sharing, respect and honesty are hallmarks of Aboriginal culture. Others spoke of the shared experiences and common ways of behaving that characterize the lives of most Aboriginal people are important for an individual's identity. Yet others emphasize the feeling of belonging and connections to a common culture and community are keys to their identity. Being a member of a group with common 'status' such as First Nation, Métis or Inuit or being from the same community of origin can be a meaningful marker of identity. Participating in Aboriginal activities such as powwows, feasts and socials, arts events and cultural ceremonies are important ways for some to reinforce their identity. In other words, there are many complex and nuanced aspects of creating an Aboriginal identity in the city and each individual is unique. The question of how individuals negotiate their individual and collective cultural identity is an unanswered question in research. There is, therefore, a need for further research on this topic.

The role that organizations play in supporting identity formation and development must be responsive to the needs of the current generation of Aboriginal people, whether the first, second or third generation

of Aboriginal urban residents. The significance of Aboriginal organizations in Toronto, either through social service agencies, economic development or through the arts, provide a supportive environment and multi-disciplinary opportunities to build positive identities. Aboriginal people is integral to the growth of the community. Urban identity formation has only been examined in recent years; however, we see that it has been happening for decades at the grassroots level around kitchen tables across the city.

The research has showed the significant link between Aboriginal organizations and identity formation for Aboriginal people in Toronto. In addition, many Aboriginal people maintain links with their community of origin to support their culture and identity. As mentioned, Aboriginal population in Toronto has shifted in recent years. It is no longer composed exclusively of recent migrants from First Nation and Métis communities. The urban Aboriginal population is now more diverse with varied identities, including many individual with 'mixed' cultural identities.

Aboriginal organizations are increasingly challenged to respond to a new diverse group of Aboriginal people. Some community members are survivors of residential schools and have experienced elements of traditional culture from being raised in their communities. Others have little or no ties to their Aboriginal community of origin and are more reliant on the urban Aboriginal community to provide them with a cultural foundation. Respondents felt strongly that there was a need for a dedicated culture centre that was separate from social service agencies. As well, there was a perceived dominance of Anishnawbe people in the present Aboriginal organizations which tended to hire more community members from other groups from learning about their own cultures and traditions and contributed to the divisiveness within the Aboriginal community.

An important issue articulated in the research was the loss of Aboriginal languages. Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents were unable to converse in their Aboriginal language. Language is a very important component of culture.

Recommendations

- 44** That Aboriginal organizations develop a program of Aboriginal ‘language immersion’ geared to families, similar to the Maori ‘Language Nests’ to attempt to keep Aboriginal languages viable in the future.
- 45** That the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto consider conducting a community-wide consultation process relating to the issue of how to institute initiatives to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal people in Toronto, including becoming a dedicated Aboriginal cultural centre. This consultation should involve a wide range of groups such as tourism organizations, the Pan Am Games organizing committee and other cultural centres, such as the proposed Thunderbird Centre in Toronto and the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg.
- 46** Aboriginal organizations should consider celebrating the cultural diversity that exists among Aboriginal people in Toronto by addressing the issue of the perceived dominance of Anishnawbe culture as practiced in Aboriginal organizations with a view to ensure that organizations recognize a variety of Aboriginal cultures.
- 47** That an Aboriginal organization take steps to acquire land outside of Toronto which will be designated an Aboriginal ‘sacred space’ where traditional ceremonies can be held. Transportation services would be part of the initiative.

17.11 Law and Justice and Aboriginal People

In response to long-standing patterns of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and calls for community-based reforms, the Toronto Aboriginal community has made significant advancements in support of Aboriginal people involved with the justice system and in the creation of Aboriginal spaces of restorative justice where the community is empowered to determine the justice needs of its members. In keeping with the organizational mission to “strengthen the capacity of the Aboriginal community and its citizens to deal with justice issues and to provide Aboriginal controlled and culturally based justice alternatives” Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto (ALST) operates six main, inter-related programs, including the Aboriginal Courtworker Program, the Community Council Program, the Gladue (Aboriginal Persons) Court Assistance Program, the Legal Advocacy Program, the Victim’s Rights Advocacy Program and the Youth Program.

The TARP research further revealed that those Aboriginal people involved in the justice system in Toronto tend to be those who are younger, experiencing poverty, have less education and are experiencing a diversity of inter-related social problems including addiction, mental illness and social isolation. In their accessing of support law and justice programs, they are then integrated into the Toronto Aboriginal community and, in some cases, exposed to Aboriginal cultural practices for the first time. Overall, these services are understood as contributing to individual healing as well as community building, the fostering of strong Aboriginal identities and the revitalization of Aboriginal culture in Toronto.

The TARP research further pointed to the persistent challenge of police and security guard racial profiling and harassment, the undervaluing of Aboriginal victims and the overcharging of Aboriginal offenders. Beyond being wrongly stopped and harassed by police officers and security guards, TARP respondents spoke of experiences of negative and differential treatment within the courts and jails as well, the research findings identified the need for more education awareness raising in the community on law and justice issues relating to Aboriginal people and for the creation of a community-based Aboriginal Duty Council to work with the existing court workers.

Recommendations

- 48** That education and awareness campaigns be initiated and include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, while focusing on police officers, security guards, lawyers and judges. The topics of the campaigns will include:
- anti-racism and anti-racial profiling strategies
 - the cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people they are expressed within the mainstream justice system
 - the systemic basis of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and the existing reforms such as s.718.2(e), the Gladue decision and the Toronto Community Council program
- 49** That government funding be allocated towards the expansion of Aboriginal community-based law and justice services across the GTA and that further support be given to the development of services in the area of Aboriginal youth and victims of crime.

50 That government funding be allocated towards the creation of an Aboriginal, community-based Duty Council to represent Aboriginal people at bail hearings and to work with the existing court workers as part of an integrated legal support team.

51 In the interest of ensuring a degree of accountability and utility to the Aboriginal community and in order to foster improved relations with the Toronto Police Service, that there be a full, Aboriginal community-based review and evaluation of the Toronto Aboriginal Peacekeeping Unit.

52 That a halfway house be initiated in Toronto for Aboriginal men being released from prison to assist in their readjustment to society.

17.12 Aboriginal Urban Governance

The research discovered that there is strong support for the notion of urban Aboriginal representative self-government but, at the same time, there was a great deal of uncertainty and apprehension regarding the meaning of the term in the Toronto context. There were many reasons put forth for the case for some form of urban governance, the most important being the desire to have more control over their lives, a ‘community voice’. For example, there was a perception that self-government would lead to more stable long-term government funding for Aboriginal organizations. The desire for some form of self-government in the city is tied to the fundamental perception that Aboriginal people have special rights, including the right to self-government, based on their unique status in Canadian society.

There was also widespread concern as to whether there is a sufficiently coherent Aboriginal community with the capacity to bring self-government to fruition. There was a sense that the creation of a stable and inclusive Aboriginal community in Toronto should precede any self-government initiative because any urban governance structure must be representative of all Aboriginal people in Toronto. The process of establishing such a representative, elected political body and how it would be structured was another area of concern, especially given the previously unsuccessful attempt to establish the Aboriginal Council of Toronto. There was also skepticism as to whether any level of the Canadian government would officially recognize any urban Aboriginal government.

Furthermore, there was uncertainty over the role the various Aboriginal political bodies currently in place, such as First Nations, Métis groups, Provincial Territorial Organizations and Tribal Councils, would play in any urban governance initiative. Various models of urban self-government involving these political bodies have been articulated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) such as a ‘host nation’ model.¹⁹¹ From time to time, political groups such as the Assembly of First Nations have expressed an interest in becoming involved in discussion pertaining to urban self-government.

Currently, the various Aboriginal social service agencies in Toronto coming together under the Toronto Aboriginal Support Service Association (TASSC), have played a role as representative of Aboriginal interests in the city through the services they provide, their Boards of Directors and their membership. This is a ‘community of interest’ model of urban self-government set out by RCAP. But respondents were clear that for self-government to be in place there needs to be a wide range of Aboriginal institutions, including those beyond the social service sector, representing a diversity of interests involved. It may be truly representative of the Aboriginal community. At this point, it may be wise to undertake a process of educating Aboriginal people in Toronto as to the idea of urban self-government as a vehicle to open up discussion and ‘test the waters’ on the topic.

Recommendations

53 That a broad-based group of Aboriginal organizations undertake a series of meetings to discuss the idea and feasibility of establishing Aboriginal urban self-government in Toronto.

54 That discussions be initiated between urban Aboriginal organizations in partnership with the three levels of government with a view of exploring the idea of Aboriginal self-government in Toronto.

17.13 Arts in the Toronto Aboriginal Community

Toronto is the home of a large and vibrant Aboriginal arts scene. From film to theatre, from music to fine art, from media to dance, there is a plethora of talented Aboriginal people engaged in artistic endeavours. Award winning playwrights, actors, authors, film makers, media producers, curators, artists and musicians make their home in Toronto. Many are recognized internationally. The numerous arts organizations in the city including the ImagiNATIVE Film Festival, ANDPVA, Native Women in the Arts, the Centre for Indigenous Theatre, Native Earth Performing Arts, Seventh Generation Image Makers and Red Sky Performance, among others, all make significant contributions to the Aboriginal and mainstream communities.

The contribution of the Aboriginal arts to the Toronto community is significant but under-recognized. On the one hand, the arts provide visibility and increased awareness of Aboriginal people to non-Aboriginal people regarding the historical and contemporary contributions that Aboriginal people have made to the development of the country and City of Toronto. Some respondents put forth the idea that being involved with the arts allows you to see the Aboriginal landscape differently and can build self confidence, especially for youth. It can open people's minds and appreciate Aboriginal culture in new ways. The arts can also provide an avenue for Aboriginal community members to develop a sense of positive identity and celebrate the creativity of members of their community.

On the other hand, many respondents suggested that the importance of the Aboriginal arts has been insufficiently recognized in the Aboriginal community. While there are some attempts that have been made to collaborate, the Aboriginal arts community is far from being embedded into the consciousness of Aboriginal people in Toronto. Many of the patrons of the arts are the Aboriginal middle class. Some respondents suggested that there is a disconnect between Aboriginal arts organizations and Aboriginal social service organizations.

Participant in the arts focus group stated that, in many cases, Aboriginal artists feel isolated and not supported by members of the larger Toronto Aboriginal community. Some arts events do not draw many patrons. Part of the issues is lack of effective marketing, a need to become more visible and making links into the Aboriginal community. More importantly, there is a need for additional funding for the arts and an arts facility.

There is great opportunity for the Aboriginal arts to provide avenues for healing, self-expression and identity formation. However, more concerted efforts must be made on all sides for intentional engagement.


Recommendations

- 55** That, as an attempt to better integrate Aboriginal arts with Aboriginal service delivery, efforts should be made to create collaborative opportunities for arts to be utilized as a tool for healing and recovery. A joint committee of Aboriginal arts and social service organizations should be established to search for ways to integrate arts into social service programs. In addition, it may be appropriate to have an 'arts seat' on Board of Directors of Aboriginal social service organizations.
- 56** That Aboriginal arts organizations work as a collective to develop cohesive marketing tools to promote their programs, performances, festivals, etc. That collective marketing effort could reduce costs of individual organizations attempting to market and promote their work, as well as offer a better 'package' of Aboriginal arts for tourists as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members.
- 57** That efforts be made to secure funding for a dedicated Aboriginal arts facility to house a number of Aboriginal arts organizations and include space where artists could go and engage in multiple artistic activities including workshops, space, art studios, rehearsal space, etc.
- 58** That mentorship opportunities between local Aboriginal artists and school age youth and youth at-risk be established to foster the next generation of Aboriginal artists, musicians, actors and directors.

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APPENDIX A

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