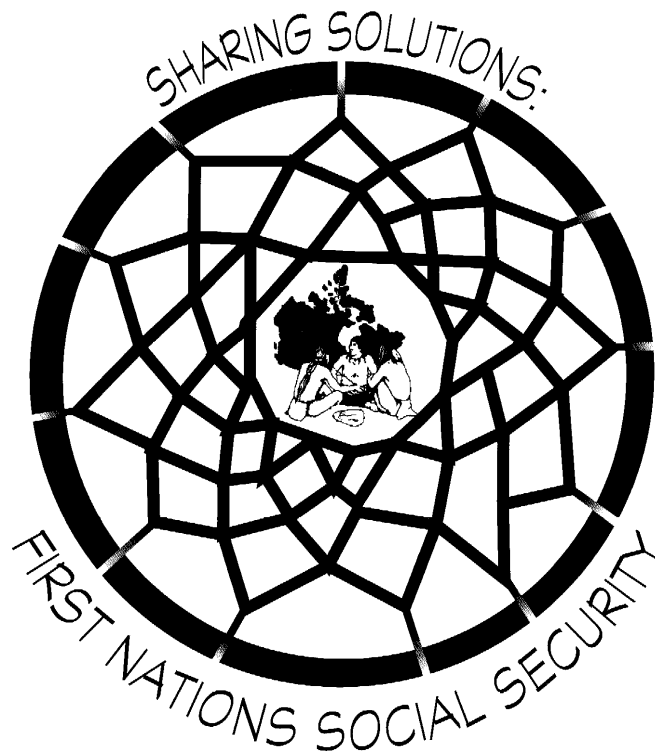


ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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First Nations Social Security Reform



FINAL REPORT

ABORIGINAL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

By: Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald, Dr. Peter Ladd, et. al.

March 1999

Table of Contents

CREDITS	6
<i>National Steering Committee</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Former National Chief.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chiefs Council on Social Development (current)</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Former Members on Chiefs Council on Social Development.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Social Development Secretariat , Assembly of First Nations</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Former Staff Technicians.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Authors.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Technical Working Group.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Research Sub-committee.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Research Synthesis Team.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Contributing Authors</i>	<i>6</i>
MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CHIEF	7
MARCH 1999.....	7
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	8
INTRODUCTION	8
THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.....	8
THE SOCIAL SECURITY SAFETY NET, WHAT IS IT?.....	9
FIRST NATION ACCESS TO THE CANADIAN SAFETY NET.....	11
<i>Problems for First Nations in Terms of Access</i>	<i>11</i>
FIRST NATIONS JURISDICTION (THE SOUTH)	13
<i>Essential Elements for Social Security Reform.....</i>	<i>13</i>
PARTNERSHIPS, FIRST NATIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM (THE NORTH)	14
FIRST NATION CAPACITY BUILDING (THE EAST).....	15
SELF SUFFICIENCY AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM (THE WEST)	16
STRATEGIES FOR REFORM (NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST)	17
<i>Federal - First Nation Relationships and Responsibilities.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Resourcing Arrangements.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Policies, Programs and Services</i>	<i>19</i>
PREREQUISITES FOR FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM.....	19
CHAPTER 2 FIRST NATION JURISDICTION AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM.....	22
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	22
DEFINING JURISDICTION.....	24
<i>Inter-jurisdictional Arrangements</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>First Nations jurisdiction.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Elements of Effective Jurisdiction.....</i>	<i>25</i>
THE PROBLEM WITH RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	26
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM	27
<i>Strategic Litigation</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Community Mobilization.....</i>	<i>29</i>
THE PROBLEM WITH RESOURCES	29
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM	30
<i>Access to development resources.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Realigned fiscal resources</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Appropriate resource instruments, arrangements and agreements</i>	<i>31</i>
THE PROBLEM WITH SOCIAL POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.....	33
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM	34
<i>Reform or renewal of a First Nation social security system by First Nations</i>	<i>35</i>
INTEGRATED AND HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING	37

<i>Systems based on individual entitlement or community entitlement</i>	37
<i>Integrated social, economic and employment development strategies</i>	37
CHAPTER 3 FIRST NATION CAPACITY BUILDING AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM ...	42
INTRODUCTION	42
<i>Education as a Tool to Empower Nations</i>	42
<i>Education and Employment Income Comparison 1991</i>	43
<i>Present and Future Cost to Maintain the Status Quo</i>	45
EMPOWERMENT VERSUS REPRESSION	45
CHAPTER 4 SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM.....	58
INTRODUCTION	58
DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORK	58
BACKGROUND	59
WHAT IS SOCIAL SECURITY?	60
WHAT IS SELF-SUFFICIENCY?	61
CONCLUSION	73
CHAPTER 5 CREATING PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM	76
INTRODUCTION	76
RESTORING PARTNERSHIPS IN SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM	77
LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIPS	77
PARTNERSHIPS TO COMBAT CHILD POVERTY	78
ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS	80
PARTNERSHIPS IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	81
HOLISTIC PLANNING - THE FORMULA FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	83
PARTNERSHIPS IN HEALTH	83
CONCLUSION	84
CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH	86
INTRODUCTION	86
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR A FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL SECURITY NET	87
HAVING A VISION OF WHAT A SOCIAL SECURITY SAFETY NET WILL STAND FOR	88
DEMONSTRATING THE PRINCIPAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY NET	91
KNOWING THE SERVICE PROVIDERS WITHIN THE SOCIAL SECURITY	94
SAFETY NET AND THE LINKAGES BETWEEN THEM	94
CHAPTER 7 FUTURE FOR FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM.....	98
IN CLOSING	98
NEXT STEPS	99
IN CONCLUSION	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	102

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Message from the National Chief

March 1999

To First Nations leaders, technicians, community members,

I am pleased to submit to you the Final Report on the Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives. This report is a culmination of two years of work and our vision of what a First Nations Social Security Safety net is. It is our belief that the framework contained herein will illustrate the necessary strategies for the development and empowerment of our Nations. It is through capacity building, meaningful exercise of jurisdiction, and partnerships that we will empower our people to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We ask you to look at the ideas contained herein and take from them those things that best meet the needs of your communities. We believe that our future is the education and development of our people. The strengthening and healing of our communities will return us to a place in history where we are truly sovereign and healthy as Nations and as a people.

The next steps outlined at the end of this report are our road map to a new way of doing things. We look forward to you adapting and implementing this social security framework in your communities – something that will require collaborations at all levels.

Phil Fontaine
National Chief
Assembly of First Nations

Chapter 1 Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

In 1996 the Assembly of First Nations launched a two-year process directed at a comprehensive review of social security programming and reform in First Nations communities. The primary objective of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative (ASI) was to focus expertise and resources from all available sources to develop creative and practical initiatives which would improve the social well being of First Nations. A secondary objective of the ASI was to define substantive and procedural issues related to achieving social well being and to recommend means of resolving them. This would be the essential step toward developing a framework for cooperative action to accomplish the long-term vision of an appropriate and comprehensive system designed to improve the social well being of First Nations.

The research procedure was a two way process consisting of comprehensive research papers and case studies/effective practices covering topical areas in jurisdiction, child poverty, income support, education and training, language and literacy, labour market training, family and community building, support services, social assistance, health, environment, disabilities, resource development and the environment and financing of First Nations social security systems.

The Director of Social Development, Research Co-ordinator, and members of the Chiefs Council on Social Development and its Research Sub-committee, oversaw the research. Fifteen research papers were commissioned across Canada. These research papers provide the background and rationale to promoting a First Nation governed social security system. The directed research process was completed in March 1998. In April a smaller team of consultants further analyzed the research and four synthesis papers were produced. Each synthesis paper was organized to examine the final research from a different perspective. The four perspectives were: Capacity Building; Jurisdiction; Self-sufficiency; and Partnerships. This chapter is an overview of the research methodology and findings.

The Social Development Framework

The foundation for the design and plan for investigation undertaken by this project was based on principles of holistic or an ecological approach to applied research. The teachings from the Medicine Wheel were the conceptual framework on which the research methodology was developed. The Medicine Wheel teachings and the overall

social development framework reflect the basic cultural ways of being in the world. The Medicine Wheel provides us with a way of thinking about and understanding social security reform. It is a tool for examining how the different issues in social security and development relate to one another. The Medicine Wheel in this context allowed us to examine social security in a way that considers the spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional well being of Aboriginal people, families, communities and nations.

Research guidelines followed a First Nations cultural perspective where elements of traditional assessment were incorporated. The teachings of the Medicine Wheel were the conceptual framework that directed the research showing how different parts of the whole were interrelated to each other. The Medicine Wheel symbol is at the heart of the cultural paradigm for First Nations and is used extensively to better understand the relationships between different parts of the whole. This model took into account First Nation traditions, cultural values, attitudes and beliefs by its appreciation of the distinctiveness of an Aboriginal worldview. This is depicted in the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. The “West” depicts the relationship and commitment to self-sufficiency. The “East” is the yearning for self-development and the importance of capacity building in this process. The “North” focuses on the importance of sharing and the traditional partnerships emanating from this tradition. The “South” involves First Nations inherent right to self-governance and exercise of jurisdiction.

The time frames for the different phases of the ASI project were: Phase I, Development of Methodology (Feb 1997-June 1997), Phase II, Directed Research Plan (June 1997-Feb. 1997) and Phase III, development of a National Strategy and Action Plan (February 1998-February 1999).

The Social Security Safety Net, What is it?

Although it is currently undergoing considerable change, the basic features of the Canadian, federal/provincial safety net, and the different ways in which its various components are financed, remain much the same. The “net” consists of several components and sub-components - various types of income assistance measures, social support services, provincial health insurance plans, public health services, and housing and infrastructure programs. The various pieces of this net are:

Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and Workers Compensation, which are all, financed in large measure through premiums deducted from earned employment income at sources, and from levies assessed at the same time on employers.

Old Age Security Payments (and the associated spousal and guaranteed income supplement) are regulated and provided by the federal government.

Social Assistance or “welfare” consists of payments that are directed to people who are not eligible for or have used up their Employment Insurance eligibility, as well as, to the

disabled and to the aged. Social Assistance programs are provincially regulated, delivered and financed from general provincial, and in some instances, municipal revenues.

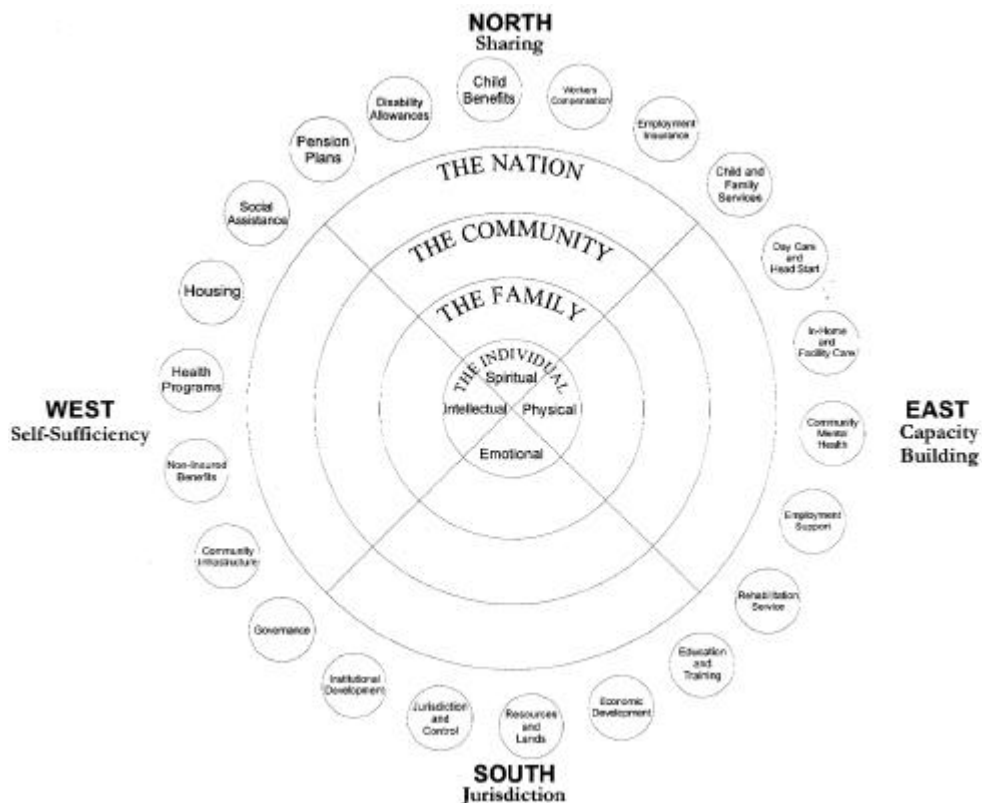
Child Tax Benefit is a direct federal payment made to families with children by Revenue Canada - the amount is determined in reference to the most recent income tax return and relevant provincial regulations and social assistance rates.

The Social Support Services component of the Safety Net consists of Day Care, Head Start Programs, In-Home Care, Facility Care, Child and Family Services, Community Mental Health Programs, Employment Support Programs, Rehabilitation Services, etc. The programs are financed out of general revenues and sometimes through client-co-payment. Provincially regulated social support service costs are shared with the federal government.

The Health Insurance and Public Health Program component are part of the Canadian Safety Net insofar as those who would otherwise be unable to pay for, or receive, the basic physician, laboratory and hospital services they require.

Regional Equalization transfers are also made from the federal government to the “have-not” provinces as part of the social security safety net.

Figure 1.1 Social Security Framework Medicine Wheel



First Nation Access to the Canadian Safety Net

Aboriginal people are supported by the safety net, at least in principle, in the same manner and to the same degree as other Canadians - securing needed support directly from provincial departments and/or provincially-funded agencies, or from the various federal departments and/or federally-funded agencies.

Since the 1960's as a part of 'devolution,' Aboriginal people have been accessing at least some components of the Canadian safety net from their own community or regionally based programs. In addition, there are some special safety-net related programs that have been developed that are unique to Aboriginal people - programs that are intended to facilitate access to some of the components of the federal/provincial safety net by those Aboriginal peoples living in remote areas. Generally, the various components of the social security safety net are financed out of general federal/provincial government revenues. The fundamental problem is Canada's contribution to the provinces for cost sharing of social assistance and social support services costs has been capped through federal restraint measures. The net result has been significantly reduced general revenues to support the overall Canadian health and social safety net. Provinces in turn have been forced to reign in their spending or simply cut costs down to the municipal level.

The effort to control costs in the area of social support services has been accompanied, by some effort to rethink how these services are provided - in the interest of improving services at the same time as expenditures are reduced. For example, by re-directing funding into early intervention services, as well as, integrating programs into larger service delivery units that will reap the benefits of economies of scale and at the same time improve client access to services. Another effort has been to actively support people who are in receipt of income assistance by offering services that will improve their employability, by assisting them in the actual search for employment.

Problems for First Nations in Terms of Access

The most basic problem experienced by Aboriginal people is the safety net is federal/provincial in design and financing. They have been developed external to Aboriginal communities and on the basis of assumptions that are imbedded in a foreign culture and experience. To make matters worse, Canada (and some provinces) *funds only some* First Nations to *deliver only some* of the various provincially regulated social and health components of the safety net to their members. Consequently, resident members must continue to access many of the support services they need from provincially funded agencies or provincial service provision offices off reserve. This can be problematic in terms of distance, cultural differences, language barriers, etc. The result is economically, socially and culturally inappropriate services are provided undermining First Nation integrity at both the community and family level. Funds/services are always directed to individuals, and seldom to the family or larger collective. This contributes to a breakdown of community/collectivist orientations at both levels over time.

Also, the amounts of assistance that one receives, if eligible, is the standard federally or provincially determined amount, and the different needs, and levels of need, in a First Nation community are not considered. Finally, the social assistance programs stop short of providing the funding levels necessary in most First Nation circumstances to help a person become job-ready or produce/support the jobs that person has been trained to fill.

In addition to problems with relevancy of programming, First Nations face the even bigger problem of accepting funding (federal and/or provincial) to permit (devolved) community based programs that are locked into compliance requirements that seldom reflect the local cost of living (e.g. northern/remote rates for those living in the north). As well, exceptional needs for services experienced by the community are rarely even considered. These include:

- a population that is much younger and experiences a higher growth rate than the non- aboriginal population;
- a population that experiences a higher level of individual and family health and social dysfunction than the non-aboriginal population;
- a population that experiences higher rates of unemployment and greater difficulties achieving economic development than does the non-aboriginal population;
- a population that experiences poorer housing and infrastructure conditions than the non-aboriginal population; and
- a population that leaves school earlier than the non-aboriginal population.

First Nations have a right to self-government - as acknowledged by the government of Canada. This assumes a government-to-government relationship respecting social safety net issues. The federal government must eventually be convinced to enter into direct funding arrangements with First Nations or regional groups of First Nations in which the current federal accountability requirement of adherence to provincial law and regulation be replaced with the expectation of consistent and auditable adherence to the First Nation laws/regulations that will be established.

The significant barrier to achieving this relationship is the repeated federal unwillingness to do what is necessary to override the factor of provincial constitutional jurisdiction in the field of social, if not health services on reserve. Whatever minimum conditions for funding under a purely First Nation/Canada scenario, achieving such an arrangement will have the very necessary effect of “de-linking” the First Nation social safety net financing from provincial welfare thinking, policies, laws, regulations and rates. This “de-linking” is essential if First Nations are to define and develop programs and services that fully reflect and respond to the unique needs that are being experienced.

First Nations Jurisdiction (the South)

First Nations traditionally were economically, politically and socially self-sufficient communities. They had distinct social security systems that were built on the twin foundations of a *land and resource base*, subject to the stewardship of the people who depended upon it, and the *social institutions* of nation, community, and family.

With respect to jurisdiction, it was as self-governing nations that the people developed traditional conservationist, distinctive and culturally relevant social security systems. Most often the social and political aspects of the social security system were based on rights, obligations and rules that were operative and recognized at the level of family and extended family, clan and nation. As the primary social institution, the family provided protection and security for individuals, and facilitated participation in the social, economic and political life of the community and nation. Social institutions - the nation, community, and especially, the family are, therefore, the heart of traditional First Nations social and economic security systems and their governance.

First Nation jurisdiction can be understood as referring to *the right and responsibility of First Nations to possess and effectively exercise authority* (legal, decision-making, moral, spiritual etc.). Jurisdiction is exercised by First Nation governments and expressed through laws, policies, institutions and programs and services. It encompasses the authority and capacity to make and implement decisions, and to have the legitimacy of these acts recognized by First Nation people and citizens, as well as by other governments.

In order to effectively exercise jurisdiction in social development and security, First Nations must have **adequate power, resources and legitimacy**. *Power* refers to the legally recognized authority to act, including legislative competence and jurisdiction. Other governments and institutions must recognize and respect what is done in actual practice. *Resources* provide the physical or economic means of acting. They include the financial, human and natural resources needed for security and further economic growth and development. *Legitimacy* refers to public confidence in and support for the government.

Essential Elements for Social Security Reform

Social security reform must lead to the development and establishment of a First Nations social security system (or net) pursuant to the exercise of First Nation jurisdiction. This system must be designed and implemented to achieve First Nation defined visions and outcomes in social development and security. For a First Nation, self-determined social security system to emerge, two things must occur:

1. Current inter-jurisdictional arrangements must be dramatically transformed. These must be realigned or renewed to support First Nations jurisdiction based on restructured relationships, responsibilities, resources and program and service
-

arrangements. These inter-jurisdictional arrangements will have the dual capacity to respect and support autonomous First Nations jurisdiction in social security *and* to link a First Nations social security net with Canadian social security programs and services in areas where First Nations see this as desirable.

2. First Nations jurisdiction must be effectively exercised in respect of social development and security to achieve First Nation defined visions (e.g. self-determined health, well being and security). This will involve the rebuilding of a First Nations social security net pursuant to First Nations jurisdiction.

Partnerships, First Nations and Social Security Reform (the North)

Our research findings indicate that the state of traditional First Nations social security has been steadily deteriorating to a total state of dependency. Many of our people live in poverty and there are excessively high rates of reliance on social assistance and income support programs. Traditional economies have been alienated from the lands that sustained them while communities struggle to build new economies without adequate resources. There are strong signs of poor physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Traditionally, communities recognized the need to balance survival needs with the needs of the family, community and nation. This concept of balance suggests the need to address issues in Aboriginal communities in a holistic manner. Income, health, employment, education and all other such factors must be considered and planned for together.

The current system of social security has created a sense of isolation among First Nations people by focusing on the procedures of funding while excluding the processes found in traditional partnerships. First Nations people receive support primarily through an allocation of money creating a false sense of social security within our communities. The cultural tradition of community partnerships is either lost or given less importance in the overall funding process. Research shows that these procedures have made a dramatic impact on First Nations cultures. The isolated dependence on someone from outside the aboriginal community for a sense of personal well being goes directly against our beliefs and traditions. The re-establishment of partnerships in Social Security Reform for First Nations communities balances economic, emotional, spiritual care giving and maintains a tradition of sharing that is woven tightly into the fabric of our culture.

Partnerships in the context of Social Security Reform for First Nations blend economic resources with traditional forms of networking and sharing. The combination of economic, emotional and spiritual endeavors creates a broader base for reform to be effective. Portions of this new reform will remain economic and will continue the work of established funding sources. Other portions will re-establish traditional and cultural links between First Nation communities and their people.

For example, the current social assistance program follows a framework that is more than thirty years old and obliges communities to adhere to provincial or territorial models, regulations and benefits levels that do not consider First Nations as acting copartners. The social assistance program has many weaknesses that relate directly to the lack of community partnerships that would combine social assistance with First Nations culture and tradition. It is assumed that recipients will soon return to the paid labour force, and does not take into consideration the loss experienced in the areas of community sharing, personal empowerment and community based partnerships. Social security reform requires partnerships that allow communities the opportunity to develop an alternative system based on Aboriginal traditions, values and needs.

First Nation Capacity Building (the East)

Education is viewed by First Nations people as the key to the future. It will give First Nations the ability to address the issues of their communities in the context of the outside world. It will also help develop economies and provide jobs. First Nations communities are predominately young and education is a prime concern as First Nations attempt to ensure that opportunities for education are accessible and equitable.

Low levels of education found among Aboriginal people in First Nation communities lead to unnecessary and unavoidable losses of social and economic benefits, not only to our communities but also to Canada. Unemployment rates and the economic disadvantages of Aboriginals are significant. Finding employment in aboriginal communities is very difficult. Even though in some case educational attainment has improved slightly over the years, economic disparities continue to widen. Trends for employment in aboriginal communities are toward low wage jobs. This results unfortunately in an increase in federal social assistance expenditures.

There is significant knowledge in our First Nation communities that we do not acknowledge or recognize. Building community capacity is an important part of planning for change in the area of social policy. *Community capacity* refers to the ability or capability of people, organizations and communities to run their programs effectively. Developing skills and competence - *developing capacity* - is a crucial part of this. If we do not build the skills needed, programs will not succeed. Mentoring and specialized training programs provided to First Nation communities are options for providing training and skills for capacity building. The key is ensuring that skills are obtained by a number of community members and that they, in turn, transfer these skills to others.

Economic development is critical in enhancing the opportunity for First Nations to change the conditions that exist in their communities. As the opportunity to earn an income increases for individual community members, so do changes to the socio-economic status of the wage earner. Education, training and access to economic opportunity are all essential to any reform process.

Throughout history we know that First Nation children have received in most cases separate and unequal schooling. Most students experienced insufficient support in school and as a result failed to develop adequate academic and social skills. Quality of health, family characteristics, peer influences, community climate, and social status influence children's readiness for school. Improvements are required to increase *student readiness* for school and correspondingly it is equally important that *schools are prepared to teach* through enhanced relevance of programming and rigor in instruction, improved school administrative support and equitable and efficient use of resources/increased funding for schools. First Nations jurisdiction over education is limited in terms of addressing these issues due to limited funding and the fact that over 80% of First Nations secondary level students attend school in provincially operated jurisdictions where services are paid for through tuition agreements.

For youth living off reserve it is often difficult to access education or training funds through their individual First Nations. Furthermore, provincial programs rarely include specific allocations for First Nation youth. These jurisdictional problems leave many Aboriginal youth without any way of obtaining the education and training they need. Many youth complain when they complete school, they still end up on welfare because they don't have marketable skills. Many youth feel strongly that their communities need to be supportive of their studies and careers and entice them to return to their communities once they finish school, for the benefit of the First Nation.

Aboriginal youth recognize the enormous responsibility they have inherited as the hope for the future of Aboriginal people. The literature shows that they are seeking support to prepare for the next century as social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual and political leaders. As they prepare for these roles they see a strong need for sustainable Aboriginal communities and culturally based stable community life. In essence, to release our youth from the cycle of dependency we must ensure that they are empowered and fully equipped to regain our self-sufficiency and natural state as self-governing people. Aboriginal language and culture is a central component of this effort.

Self Sufficiency and Social Security Reform (the West)

The Canadian social security system is usually thought of as a bundle of rights and programs that collectively constitute a "social safety net." The metaphor "safety net" implies that normally people would have what they need, and that the net is a kind of insurance against catastrophe if it should happen that someone "falls" off from the platform of "normal" self reliance and prosperity. The Canadian social safety net is made up of a blend of income security, health and social insurance programs and "social adjustment" services, designed to help those who are having difficulty staying on the platform to "adjust" to mainstream expectations.

A basic assumption of the Canadian social security system is that less than 10% of the population will ever really need the safety net. If that is the case this is the opposite for Aboriginal communities where 90% of the population would be categorized as "out of

the mainstream” in terms of their current reliance on social assistance, housing subsidies and other aspects of the social safety net.

Social security for Aboriginal people must promote and “secure” a way of life that produces “whole health,” broadly defined as human well being and prosperity. Such a concept goes beyond money and program-based solutions. When conceived in this manner, the delivery of programs to and for communities can never bring “social security” to Aboriginal people. Until Aboriginal communities can recover an adequate measure of the wealth they possessed, true social security will be an illusive goal. Traditionally, wealth existed in two inter-related forms: a sustainable economic base (the means to provide food, clothing, shelter, medicines and other material needs) and healthy human relationships (this safety net was animated by love, sharing and caring, and it was maintained through healthy relationships of respect, trust and mutual responsibility, as well as, through effective leadership).

The primary power to transform the relationships and conditions contributing to present levels of well being and prosperity lies within Aboriginal nations and communities and more particularly within the people. A vital line of action for social security reform must be to focus on empowering the ordinary citizens to participate meaningfully and effectively in the future. To empower people means to build their capacity to think, to speak, to consult together, to resolve differences together and to exercise power in choosing and building their future. In addition, no reform will secure well-being and prosperity in Aboriginal communities unless, and until, appropriate healing takes place from the effects of past and on-going trauma, abuse and addictions.

Strategies for Reform (North, South, East and West)

The ASI research identified many barriers to First Nation jurisdiction in social development and security. Strategies for achieving reform in each of these areas were recommended as follows:

Federal - First Nation Relationships and Responsibilities

The realignment of Federal-First Nation relations is a fundamental pre-requisite in reforming First Nations social security and creating the space that is necessary for First Nations jurisdiction to be effectively exercised. The process of social security reform, and the realignment of First Nation-Canada relations must ensure that the Crown’s treaty and fiduciary responsibilities are upheld, and that Aboriginal treaty and human rights and First Nation jurisdiction are recognized. Provincial governments can not be completely left out of this process. They have an important role, especially in accommodating improved First Nation access to, and control and management of lands and resources.

This means securing agreement for a moratorium on existing policy directions and priorities of the federal government until an agreeable agenda can be developed for the pursuit of more fundamental reforms. It also means pressing the federal government to

have central agencies directly engaged in substantive discussions around: restructured relationships, the recognition of Canada's responsibilities, the acknowledgment of First Nations jurisdictions, and clearing the way for its exercise through the realignment of power and resources, and the abandonment of current policies, programs and priorities.

Finally, the Government of Canada must be held accountable for commitments made in *An Agenda for Action and Gathering Strength*. Links with social security reform must be made with specific commitments concerning renewed partnerships, recognition and strengthening of First Nation governments, equitable and sustainable fiscal relationships and supporting stronger First Nation communities.

Resourcing Arrangements

Fiscal and other resources must be extended to First Nations for the purposes of a social security system on the basis of Aboriginal and treaty rights, treaty and fiduciary responsibilities and obligations, recognition of First Nation jurisdiction and authority, and in line with the respective constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments.

Resourcing arrangements must provide First Nations with improved access to lands and resources, access to economic development opportunities, and opportunities to develop other resources such as human capacities, infrastructure and technology.

Resourcing arrangements for social development must be integrally linked with the resourcing of long term economic development strategies to ensure a more dynamic and productive approach. An appropriate balance between fiscal resources for social and economic development should be sought.

First Nation entitlements must be more responsive to First Nation needs and issues of adequacy, **rather than the federal and provincial government agenda for expenditure reductions only**. Resourcing agreements and instruments must:

- be developed to meet First Nation needs on the basis of First Nation rights and federal responsibilities, with consideration given to applying principles of fiscal federalism to new funding arrangements to support a First Nation social security net.
 - reflect incentives and opportunities for social and economic development
 - reflect and take account of the extent to which First Nation access to lands and resources has been improved, or alternatively denied,
 - be flexible enough to accommodate First Nation decisions concerning the specific features and orientations of social security systems, and specific programs and services
-

- support accountability mechanisms that are internally focused, with accountability flowing from First Nation leaders and institutions to First Nation communities in the first instance.
- recognize the unique economies of First Nations, and First Nation cultural premises in employment (e.g. definitions of “work” and understandings of how the product of work is shared within First Nation communities).
- accommodate increased expenditures as a consequence of changing demographic and economic conditions

Policies, Programs and Services

Social security reform must lead to First Nations people accessing programs and services that are part of a First Nation determined social security system. This system would be designed, developed and implemented by First Nations pursuant to the inherent right of self-government and the exercise of First Nations jurisdiction. First Nation social security needs could then be met through First Nation relevant policies, programs and services. In some cases, First Nations will have to continue to access social security measures through the mainstream, Canadian social safety net, either on an indefinite or transitional basis. These areas would need to be the subject of ongoing discussion and agreement among all the various stakeholders.

Prerequisites for First Nations Social Security Reform

- The process of reform must be rooted in and carried out in accordance with the traditions, cultures and values of the people.
 - Viable mechanisms, processes and opportunities for participation, consultation, information-sharing and decision making by First Nations people at the community level must be established.
 - Community and governance capacities in the area of social security reform and development must be promoted through a variety of initiatives, including those directed both at developing and applying leadership, human resource and community capacities in effecting change.
 - A First Nation social security system must be based on an integrated and holistic programming and planning foundation.
 - In designing their own social security systems First Nations consider two different strategic approaches to structuring their social security systems: the “individual entitlement approach” and the “community entitlement approach.” Either may be appropriate to First Nation communities, depending on local economic and social
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conditions, location, philosophy, cultures and values, and priorities and preferences for the future.

- Social and employment development plans be balanced and integrated with long term economic development strategies.
 - Long-term economic development strategies must be sensitive and appropriate to local economic conditions, and compatible with community philosophies, culture and values generally, and specifically with respect to lands, resources and the environment, and community perspectives on the relationship between work, social development and security.
 - In establishing First Nation social security systems, First Nations build on existing capacity, including First Nation institutions, programs, expertise and partnerships in the areas of social and cultural development, community healing, health and wellness, child and family services, education, training, languages and literacy, housing, economic employment and business development.
 - Cooperative development work be undertaken among First Nations in reforming social security from a First Nations perspective.
 - Initiatives to enhance First Nation governance capacities and legitimacy in the area of social development and security be established and pursued.
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Chapter 2 First Nation Jurisdiction and Social Security Reform

Historical Overview

First Nations traditionally were economically, politically and socially self-sufficient communities. They had distinct social security systems that were built on the twin foundations of a *land and resource base*, subject to the stewardship of the people who depended upon it, and the *social institutions* of nation, community and especially family.

Historically, First Nation self-sufficiency was tied to diverse and successful economies based on hunting and gathering, trapping, fishing, farming, arts and crafts, sustainable development, and inter First Nation trade relations. The land and its resources provided the basis for traditional social and economic security systems. First Nations occupied specific territories, regulated relations with neighboring nations, and in respect of their own lands and resources, established systems of tenure, access, conservation and management, amounting to ownership and governance.

First Nations developed institutions and strategies to ensure the equitable distribution and sharing of resources during periods of scarcity and abundance. As part of the social security system, these institutions and strategies also ensured that episodes of scarcity would be infrequent and that there would be sufficient food for all. This was achieved through proper stewardship and respectful management of lands and resources.

It was as self-governing nations that our people developed traditional conservationist, distributive and culturally relevant social security systems. Most often the social and political aspects of the social security system were based on rights, obligations and rules that were operative and recognized at the level of family and extended family, clan or nation. As the primary social institution, the family provided protection and security for individuals, and facilitated participation in the social, economic and political life of the community and the nation as a whole. Social institutions -- the nation, community and especially the family were, therefore, at the heart of traditional First Nation social and economic security systems, and their governance.

In summary, traditional First Nation social security systems were based on a traditional land and resource base, and social institutions, such as the family. These systems were formed in accordance with culturally determined values and objectives in social security. They were, however, displaced over time by a non-First Nation social security system, through the exercise of federal and provincial government control. This was coincident with the dispossession of traditional lands and resources, and the processes of colonization that were steadily subsuming First Nation social and political institutions.

While the conditions that spawned traditional First Nation social security systems have changed dramatically since contact with Europeans, the cultural perspectives, values and worldviews of First Nation peoples have not. This means that the cultural premises of the traditional First Nation social security net have continued validity, and relevance for contemporary First Nation social security systems. In reclaiming jurisdiction in social security, and establishing First Nation social security system through the exercise of jurisdiction, First Nations may choose to incorporate and build upon these cultural roots.

Some of the cultural premises of First Nations social security systems, both traditional and contemporary, are identified below. Where relevant, these are juxtaposed against the cultural premises that underpin Euro-Canadian approaches and the Canadian social security system that Aboriginal peoples now experience:

- focus on family and community as locus of responsibility
 - individuals are uniquely valued for their contribution to the community and to collective well-being
 - work is an undifferentiated part of community life; the benefit and product of individual work, talents and gifts belongs not only to the individual but also to the family, community and nation.
 - community and family responsibility for the development and well-being of individuals; dealing with hardships is a collective, as well as, an individual responsibility and obligation; help is extended in a non-judgmental manner, often according to social duty or obligation and through the social institutions of the family and community.
 - the values of self-sufficiency are balanced with sharing and the distribution of wealth
 - social security is based on a holistic vision of health: physical (food, shelter), intellectual/mental (education) spiritual and emotional (language)
 - lands, resources and First Nation economies are integrally linked with social policy objectives, including meeting the needs of the people, and promoting holistic health (emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual)
 - a decent standard of living, including health and well being, is a right of all members of a community.
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Defining Jurisdiction

The term 'jurisdiction' is subject to a variety of interpretations and definitions. For the purposes of discussing social security and a First Nation social security net it is, however, important to distinguish between two aspects of jurisdiction: *inter-jurisdictional arrangements* and *First Nation jurisdiction*. These are two sides of the same coin.

Inter-jurisdictional Arrangements

The term jurisdiction is frequently used as a catchall phrase, label or category under which are fitted a host of issues. These issues most often are associated with:

- relationships (e.g. treaty, fiduciary, nation-to-nation, government-to-government)
- rights (e.g. Aboriginal, treaty, human)
- resources (e.g. funding arrangements, fiscal, lands and resources, economies), and
- policies, programs and services.

The focus is primarily on how the exercise of federal and provincial jurisdiction, in social security, for example, affects First Nation peoples and communities (including their relationships, rights, social, political and economic status, health, lands and resources, and their governments and jurisdiction). To distinguish it from 'First Nation jurisdiction', we will refer to this aspect of jurisdiction as 'inter-jurisdictional' arrangements or matters.

First Nations jurisdiction

First Nation jurisdiction can be understood as referring to *the right and responsibility of First Nations to possess and effectively exercise authority* (legal, decision-making, moral, spiritual etc.). First Nation jurisdiction is generally exercised by First Nation governments. Based on traditional political practices, these may include social institutions such as the extended family or clan. It encompasses the authority to make and implement decisions of public (and in some instances private) matters, and to have the legitimacy of these acts recognized by First Nation people, as well as, by other governments. For First Nations, the concept of jurisdiction is closely associated with self-determination and self-government.

Both aspects of jurisdiction -- First Nation jurisdiction and inter-jurisdictional arrangements -- are important because, in order for a First Nation determined and controlled social security net to be established, change must occur with respect to both aspects of jurisdiction, and in the following manner.

- First** Federal and provincial jurisdiction over First Nation social security must be withdrawn to create jurisdictional space for the exercise of First Nation jurisdiction over social development and security.
- Second** First Nation jurisdiction must be exercised with respect to social development and security to achieve First Nation defined visions (e.g. self-determined health, well being and security). This will involve the rebuilding of a First Nation social security net.
- Third** Current inter-jurisdictional arrangements must be dramatically transformed. These must be established to support First Nation jurisdiction based on restructured relationships, responsibilities, resources and program arrangements. These inter-jurisdictional arrangements will have the dual capacity to support autonomous First Nation jurisdiction in social security *and* to link a First Nation social security net with Canadian social security programs and services in areas where First Nations see this as desirable.

Elements of Effective Jurisdiction

In order to effectively exercise these three principles of jurisdiction in social security, First Nations must have: (1) adequate ***relationships*** and ***responsibilities*** with the Canadian Government, (2) First Nations owned and operated ***resources*** and (3) ***social policies, programs*** and ***services*** that reflect the needs of First Nations people. These terms are defined as:

Number 1- The legally recognized authority to act is paramount in Canadian/First Nations relationships. Conflict may arise from the constitution, from legislation, court decisions or custom. The Canadian government must recognize, in practice, equal relationships and responsibilities with First Nations people to solve these conflicts.

Number 2- First Nations resources will comprise the physical or economic means of acting, in particular financial resources, but also information, technology, human resources and natural resources needed for security and further economic growth and development. Resources are needed to sustain an adequate relationship between First Nations and the Canadian Government. Without adequate resources there is no equality.

Number 3- Social policies, programs and services must be creative ventures that will include First Nations cultures and rituals. Public confidence in and support for government programs only comes after a shared perspective has been developed. Legitimacy arises from the way leaders are chosen, the extent to which developed programs respond to public wishes, whether services succeed in satisfying public expectations, and whether developed policies respect the human rights of First Nations people.

The Problem with Relationships and Responsibilities

The official Canadian position regarding its responsibilities toward First Nations for social security represents the most significant obstacle to First Nations jurisdiction. Canada takes the position that social assistance is a provincial constitutional, legislative and fiscal responsibility, and that it has no treaty, fiduciary or statutory obligations to fund First Nations social assistance, on or off reserve. This is notwithstanding a long and continuing history of the Crown assuming a position of trust and promising to ensure social and economic security and development, often in the context of treaty relations.

In practice, Canada continues to exercise significant discretion over First Nations social and economic development, extending First Nation social assistance on reserve, but administering this in accordance with provincial standards. From the Crown's perspective, social assistance is provided as a matter of discretionary policy, rather than pursuant to any statutory, treaty or fiduciary responsibility. Provincial governments provide social assistance to off-reserve First Nation members, on the same basis as other provincial residents, without compensation from Canada.

In general, provincial governments actively support the First Nation position and promote it in their efforts to halt federal off-loading of social development responsibilities. However, the provinces are not overly concerned with accommodating First Nation interests, needs or rights, let alone jurisdiction. While provinces are willing to work with First Nations to counter federal attempts to off-load costs and responsibilities, they are not prepared to acknowledge First Nations jurisdiction, and are apparently quite content to see provincial jurisdiction extended and applicable on reserve in social security and other matters. Nor are they willing to recognize that new approaches to the allocation and management of lands and resources constitute part of the solution to First Nations dependency.

The current First Nations social security rests upon the federal governments' interpretation of relationships with and responsibilities towards First Nations generally, and specifically with respect to social security matters. Canada provides funding for social assistance as a discretionary policy measure, rather than pursuant to statutory, constitutional, treaty or fiduciary responsibilities. The federal policy of administering social assistance programs on reserve in accordance with provincial rules, the denial of responsibility for off-reserve members and the current environment of off-loading and fiscal restraint has allowed provincial jurisdiction and "systems" to seriously encroach upon First Nation social security matters. Increasingly, Canada is transferring the fiscal burden and political responsibility for First Nation programs and services to First Nations themselves, without a concomitant recognition of First Nations jurisdiction, or the provision of adequate resources to meet either basic maintenance needs or promote the type of social and economic development that ultimately underpins health, well-being and security.

Recommended Strategies to Solve the Problem

Specific strategies for pursuing restructured relationships and responsibilities include:

A two pronged strategy aimed at restructuring relations with Canadian governments, especially the federal government, to facilitate social security reform on the basis of First Nation jurisdiction.

The first element of the strategy would be to secure agreement for a moratorium on existing policy directions and priorities of the federal government, and the pace at which they are being imposed (including FTAs) until an agreed upon agenda and process can be developed between Canada and First Nations for the pursuit of more fundamental reforms. Second, as a signal of its commitment to a “new relationship” and “partnership”, as outlined in the Agenda for Action, the federal government should be pressed to have central agencies directly engaged in substantive discussions. These discussions could be focused around the resolution of jurisdictional issues, including restructured relationships, the recognition of Canada’s responsibilities, the acknowledgment of First Nations jurisdiction, and clearing the way for its exercise through the realignment of power and resources, and the abandonment of current policies, programs and priorities.

Hold the Government of Canada to accountable for commitments made in An Agenda for Action and Gathering Strength.

While lacking specific details, Canada has put forward four broad areas in its to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to which social security reform might be tied. Specifically:

- renewed partnerships
- recognition and strengthening of First Nation governments
- equitable and sustainable fiscal relationships
- supporting stronger First Nation communities and peoples.

First Nations should adopt specific strategies to compel Canada to engage in discussions and negotiations around social security reform in good faith and as a measure of the commitments they have made. The commitment to equitable and sustainable fiscal relationships could be linked with the resourcing of First Nations social security systems based on adequate resources to meet First Nations needs, and to incorporate social and economic development strategies as an overall element of reform.

Work Towards Implementation of Specific RCAP Recommendations

In working to secure *specific* commitments from *An Agenda for Action* and *Gathering Strength*, First Nations should promote implementation of **specific** recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, especially regarding the call to federal, provincial and territorial governments to make room for an Aboriginal order of government in Canada.

Specifically concerning social security reform, First Nations should pursue implementation of the Commission's recommendation that Aboriginal control, based on the inherent right of self-government be recognized as a fundamental principle, and a prerequisite for culturally appropriate programs and *effective alternatives* to the status quo. Under this model, the role of non-Aboriginal governments would be to *facilitate and promote* rather than design and administer. Funding arrangements would be the primary point of interface and interaction between First Nations and Canadian governments (RCAP, 1998)

Bilateral agreements between Canada and First Nations, and possibly with provincial governments.

Bilateral agreements would be established on an intergovernmental basis and would define the inter-jurisdictional interface and relationship between First Nation and Canadian social security systems, as well as, respective roles and responsibilities in social security reform. Bilateral agreements are discussed in more detail in the section below on recommended strategies for resourcing arrangements.

Further work by First Nations to develop and articulate a First Nation perspective on "social development"

First Nations need to engage in a further process to spell out the specific elements of a First Nation strategy for social security (the details of a First Nation social security system). In order to preclude further denial of jurisdictional room to First Nations by federal and provincial governments, First Nations need to establish how specifically they will resume and exercise jurisdiction over social development, including the standards and objectives they will adopt for policies, programs and services.

Strategic Litigation

Litigation should be considered as a complementary strategic option by which First Nations can pursue reformed relationships and understandings of responsibilities in the area of First Nations social development. Although *Delgamuukw* and other recent case law opens up new avenues for resolving jurisdictional issues around social development and security, the evidentiary burdens, costs and risks that would be imposed on First

Nations make litigation a less than comprehensive solution to the resolution of jurisdictional issues. Further legal research and strategic, targeted litigation are suggested.

Community Mobilization

The mobilization, empowerment, education and participation of grassroots First Nations peoples and communities should be included as an element of the strategy to restructure relationships and responsibilities. Other priorities might be to target the Canadian public in education and information campaigns, to raise awareness of the issues surrounding social security reform, First Nation rights, Canada's responsibilities and the costs of maintaining the status quo.

The Problem with Resources

Access to resources is a prerequisite to effective governance in social security. These include not only fiscal resources, but also information, technology, human and natural resources that are needed for security and economic growth. Resources provide the means for transforming power and jurisdiction into effective and meaningful action. Current resource levels and arrangements constitute one of most significant barriers to the effective exercise of First Nations jurisdiction.

Aboriginal peoples have been dispossessed of the land and resource base and economies that were at the very heart of their traditional social security systems. Our research identified many of the specific barriers that today deny Aboriginal peoples *access* to lands and resources, and opportunities to participate in the sustainable management, control and use of these. From a jurisdictional perspective these barriers are numerous, but for the most part can be traced to the following:

Provincial jurisdiction over lands and resources, and limited opportunities for incorporating First Nation views, interests and rights (including treaty and Aboriginal rights) in access, control and management regimes affecting traditional and treaty territories.

Federal jurisdiction over lands reserved for Indians and associated resources, exercised through *Indian Act* provisions which preclude meaningful economic development.

For the most part, traditional lands and resources as the foundation of First Nations social security have been replaced by a system of cash transfers aimed at maintaining First Nations people and communities at or below the poverty level, and denying access to social and economic development opportunities that ultimately can transform the conditions of human development.

As a prerequisite to human and social development, the absence of long term, strategic economic development poses a serious threat to achieving First Nations social security. The location of many reserves, and the frequently inadequate reserve land and resource base precludes meaningful First Nations economic development. The inability of First Nations to control economic decision making, eliminate duplication in programs and services and access stable funding for economic institutions further frustrates the goal of First Nations self-sufficiency. The absence of an articulated economic and employment development plan for First Nations will continue the current disadvantage of First Nations in creating and locating employment for their membership (FSIN, 1997). Serious imbalances in social and economic spending patterns and allocations have also imposed huge costs in terms of fiscal resources, human lives and social development. Expenditures (and funding agreements) are heavily weighted towards **remedial spending** for the alleviation of social problems, at the cost of a long term, stable and productive funding base that ultimately can animate First Nations economic and community development.

Recommended Strategies to Solve the Problem

The resource aspects of a First Nations social security system must address issues at four levels:

- the extension of fiscal and other resources on the basis of Aboriginal and treaty rights
- access to development resources
- realigned fiscal resources
- appropriate resource instruments, arrangements and agreements
- Extension of fiscal and other resources on the basis of Aboriginal and treaty rights

Fiscal and other resources should be extended to First Nations for the purposes of a social security system, on the basis of Aboriginal and treaty rights, treaty and fiduciary responsibilities and obligations, recognition of First Nations jurisdiction and authority, and in line with the respective constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments.

Access to development resources

The resources of a First Nations social security net should not depend solely upon the transfer of cash or fiscal resources to First Nations. Indeed, past experience shows that cash transfers only perpetuate welfare and other dependencies. First Nations will require access to a broader set of non-cash resources in order to support a First Nation social security system that focuses on human, social and economic *development* rather than simply maintenance of situations of poverty and dependence. This includes:

- improved access to lands and resources
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- access to economic development opportunities
- development of “tangible resources” including human capability, infrastructure and technology as well as “intangible resources” such as the healing and spiritual capacities of communities, knowledge and understanding, motivation and inspiration.

Realigned fiscal resources

Efforts to realign fiscal resources for the purposes of supporting a First Nation social security net should focus on achieving an appropriate balance between fiscal resources for social and economic development. First Nation entitlements must be more responsive to First Nation needs and issues of adequacy, rather than federal and provincial expenditure reduction agendas alone. First Nations should actively challenge Canada on current resource levels and standards, and employ compelling cost/benefit arguments put forward by RCAP for increasing the resource levels available to First Nations. First Nations should also further explore the *legal* basis for entitlements to adequate funding, including to assist with *development*, and prepare legal arguments based on treaty or Aboriginal rights, the Crown’s fiduciary obligations, or recognition of First Nation ownership of unceded lands and the Crown’s legal duty to respect this.

Appropriate resource instruments, arrangements and agreements

First Nations must adopt the goal of securing constitutionally protected fiscal agreements with Canada based on treaty entitlements, Aboriginal rights, fiduciary obligations, and equity with other Canadian governments. These agreement should supply adequate resources to meet the needs and expenditure requirements of First Nations (FSIN, 1998).

Resource agreements to support a First Nations social security net must reflect incentives and opportunities for development, both social and economic, rather than continued dependence. Resource agreements should encompass substantial direct funding for economic development as well as social development. They should reflect and take account of the extent to which First Nation access to lands and resources has been improved, or alternatively denied.

Funding arrangements associated with economic and employment development strategies must not be dependent or excessively tied to the mainstream economy and labour market. Rather, there must be recognition of the unique economies of First Nations, and First Nation cultural premises in employment (e.g. definitions of “work” and understandings of how the product of work is shared within First Nation communities).

Resource arrangements must be flexible enough to accommodate First Nation decisions concerning the specific features and orientations of social security systems, and specific programs and services. They should also support accountability mechanisms that are

internally focused, with accountability flowing from First Nation leaders and institutions to First Nation communities in the first instance.

First Nations must not be penalized either on an ongoing basis or when funding agreements are re-negotiated for improvements they have been able to effect in social and economic conditions in First Nation communities under First Nation social security systems. This is a basic premise of the development approach: that the benefits of development remain within the community to be reinvested and harnessed to meet other community priorities and development needs.

Innovative financing approaches and instruments must be developed to meet First Nation needs on the basis of First Nation rights and federal responsibilities. Consideration should be given to applying principles of fiscal federalism to new funding arrangements to support a First Nation social security net (Brown, 1996).

Funding formulas should provide guarantees that fiscal resources will be provided to accommodate increased expenditures as a consequence of changing demographic and economic conditions.

A single-window approach to transfer resources for different social, economic, education and development support should be adopted.

Bilateral Agreements should be established between First Nations and Canada, and negotiated on a community basis, or more practically, on a tribal, regional, nation, provincial or even national basis. Such agreements would create a set of specific understandings between the parties concerning relationships and responsibilities, including the recognition of First Nation jurisdiction, the implementation of treaty rights, and federal treaty and fiduciary responsibilities, resource arrangements, including cash and non-cash components, and any standards or principles governing First Nation social security systems.

Similar, though likely less comprehensive bilateral agreements, might be negotiated with provincial governments. These could address issues such as the inter-jurisdictional interface between First Nation and provincial systems (laws, policies, programs), First Nation delivery of provincial programs and services in defined areas, or access to other programs and services on a permanent or temporary basis. These could also be used to direct provincial resources towards First Nation social security systems, either on the basis of improved direct access to lands and resources, resource revenue sharing arrangements or fiscal resources. These agreements would appear to be more compatible with First Nation perspectives on their relationships with Canada (nation-to-nation, treaty based) and on associated responsibilities (fiduciary, treaty) than other approaches.

The Problem with Social Policies, Programs and Services

Research for the ASI initiative, and from other sources, has pointed out many shortcomings in the current system of social policies, programs and services. These are summarized as follows:

Values and culture: Social programs and services are almost exclusively structured on the basis of western, Euro-Canadian rather than First Nation cultural premises, values and world views.

Limited opportunity for innovation: Social assistance programs are standardized rather than adapted to local conditions.

Individual versus community entitlement: the Canadian social assistance system defines need based on individual productivity rather than collective, community-based economic activity and interdependence. This approach looks at the disadvantaged individual within society, and not the society as being disadvantaged. Accordingly, social assistance is made available solely on the basis of individual rather than community entitlement.

Assumptions about local economic and employment circumstances: Many of the assumptions, which underpin mainstream social security systems, simply do not hold for First Nation communities. These include the assumption that First Nations people have access to and are connected with a healthy labour market. Programs oriented towards job creation, employment training and business opportunities are not always appropriate in First Nations communities because of local economic conditions, limited access to mainstream markets and economic opportunities, and limited infrastructure and access to capital on reserve. Second, social assistance benefit levels are tied with “employability”. Federal social security reform proposals target training and labour market connection as a condition for access to or receipt of social benefits. For First Nations, little consideration is given to issues of employment readiness, local employment conditions, or local definitions of work and employment, including traditional activities. Finally, obtaining social assistance requires proof of “need”. However, social assistance benefit levels are not designed nor applied to meet the more costly basic needs of individuals and families living in remote or isolated First Nation communities (Ontario First Nations Project Team, 1992).

Inequities: Notwithstanding DIAND’s policy of administering social assistance in accordance with provincial standards and guidelines, many provincial-type services and resources are not available on-reserve because they have not been adopted under regional DIAND policy guidelines; this leads to inequities between on-reserve First Nation peoples, and off-reserve and non-Aboriginal peoples; further inequities between provinces or regions arise from differences between applicable social assistance rules in each province (Congress of First Nations Chiefs, 1996).

Fragmentation: In administering social security measures, First Nation communities must cope with multiple programs and services that focus on specific problems and issues rather than adopting an integrated perspective of health and well-being. These emanate from numerous federal and provincial agencies, each requiring that different standards, obligations, reporting, administrative and other requirements be met. Social programs are designed, developed and ultimately administered in isolation, with limited integration of resources from related programs and services in order to better meet the specific needs of clients. All of this results in duplication and inefficiencies, an increased administrative load, gaps in services, and an approach which makes it impossible to help the whole person and the whole community. Funding arrangements make it almost impossible for communities to develop comprehensive healing and wellness strategies and to link these with various social security resources.

Recommended Strategies to Solve the Problem

Reforming policies, programs and services in an effort to resolve some of the problems and concerns identified above is really an effort to reform the nuts and bolts of the social security system for First Nations people. Reforms to “**the system**” can be achieved in the following ways:

Reform of the Canadian social security system and mainstream social policies and programs by federal and provincial governments.

In this scenario change at the First Nation level is effected through the actions, and exercise of jurisdiction by federal and provincial governments working cooperatively to reform the Canadian social safety net, primarily for the benefit of mainstream Canadian society. First Nation reforms are incidental to mainstream reforms. For First Nations, the system is essentially the status quo, or the new status quo that emerges from Canadian social security reform.

Reform of the Canadian social security system, achieved through the cooperative efforts of federal, provincial and First Nation governments.

In this scenario, change is effected through reforms to the mainstream system, but these reforms result in programs and services which are significantly more responsive to First Nation needs and circumstances than in the past. For First Nations the result may be a “new” social security system that encompasses access to universal and more effective targeted programs, and other adaptations to mainstream programs to make them more responsive to First Nations. It may involve the exercise of a measure of First Nation jurisdiction, control or authority, through, for example, First Nation delivery, or greater

flexibility in the application of resources. First Nations *influence* how federal and provincial jurisdiction is exercised, but the system which results is not itself an expression of First Nation jurisdiction.

Reform or renewal of a First Nation social security system by First Nations

This system would be designed, developed and implemented by First Nations pursuant to the inherent right of self-government and exercise of First Nation jurisdiction. The system would need to be established *in part* through cooperative discussions and negotiations with federal and provincial governments. However, such discussions and negotiations would be based on a foundation of restructured and realigned relationships (i.e. recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights, First Nation jurisdiction), resourcing arrangements and assumptions about policies, programs and services. First Nation social security needs would be met primarily through First Nation policies, programs and services. In some areas, First Nations will continue to access social security measures through the mainstream, Canadian social safety net, either on an indefinite or transitional basis. These areas would need to be the subject of discussion and agreement among all parties.

Social security reform must proceed from an understanding that development and the vision of the future comes from within a people, and that healing is a necessary part of development.

The process of reform must be rooted in and complement the traditions and culture of our people. Reform processes must be carried out in accordance with First Nation culture, values and ways. Viable mechanisms, processes and opportunities for participation, consultation, information sharing and decision making by First Nations must be established. First Nations must have the opportunity to participate in envisioning their social security system, establishing strategic directions, planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and reviewing the system. They must also have the opportunity to pursue community, family and personal healing as part of the process of reform. First Nations leaders within the community, including political and spiritual leaders, elders and others, can animate these processes. The inclusive participation of all segments of society -- women, men, youth, elders and persons with disabilities -- is critical.

Community and governance capacity in the area of social security reform and development must be promoted.

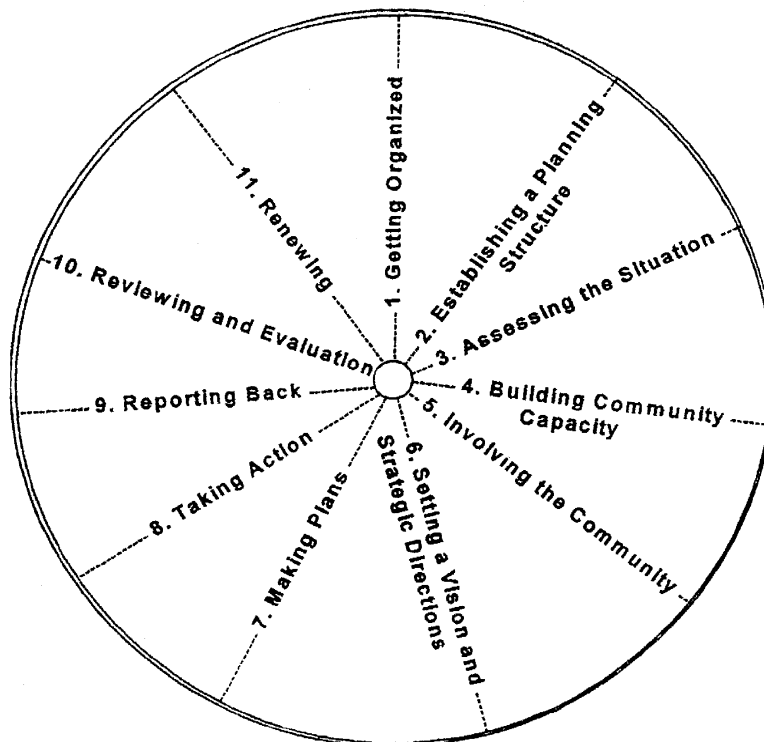
This might encompass a variety of initiatives directed both at developing and applying leadership, human resource and community capacities in effecting change. Some options include:

- special locally or regionally based programs to strengthen the capacity of community leaders (political, program, traditional, grassroots), program staff, community volunteers and others in the area of community development and healing, the overall
-

development and management of social security systems and programs and implementation of strategic directions

- the use of methodologies such as participatory action research and community learning plans to assist communities participate in and move toward action in community development and healing processes
- formal education and learning programs extended either through virtual colleges, distance education or more formal education institutions
- voluntary local human and community development societies within the community that operate at arms length from government, and promote social security, health and well-being
- the use of informal (and more formal) groups and mechanisms to obtain input concerning the design, development, monitoring and evaluation of social security systems, as well as delivery of programs and services (e.g. learning circles, kitchen table discussions, feasts).

Figure 2.1 Holistic Planning Wheel



Integrated and holistic programming and planning

Social assistance reform will work best within a framework of integrated economic and social reform (RCAP, 1998). A First Nation social security net should be founded on several interconnected and mutually reinforcing policy, program and service components, including not only social assistance and income support, but also employment, health, housing, social services, education, training, languages and literacy, and economic, land and resource development. This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of physical, intellectual, spiritual and cultural and emotional health well being and security. Integrated systems must also be cognizant of the particular circumstances, needs and aspirations, and potential roles, responsibilities and contributions of different segments of First Nation society, including extended families, youth, elders, persons with disabilities, children women and men (for example, the desire of First Nation youth to be involved in decision-making and cultural healing activities, the desire of First Nation members who have disabilities to be recognized as active, contributing and uniquely valued members of the community, the desire of women to fulfill both traditional roles and responsibilities, and to be active participants in community development processes, or in waged employment activities).

Systems based on individual entitlement or community entitlement.

In designing their own social security systems First Nations will want to consider two different strategic approaches to structuring of their social security systems. These were described by RCAP as the “individual entitlement approach” or the “community entitlement approach.” Either may be appropriate to First Nation communities, depending on local economic and social conditions, location, philosophy, cultures and values, and priorities and preferences for the future. Examples of individual entitlement approaches include processes which focus on assisting individuals make the transition from welfare to self-reliance through personal assessment and development aimed at overcoming barriers to education, training and employment, or through direction towards business and employment development opportunities, or income security programs that support traditional harvesters. Community entitlement approaches generally work on the principle that the community will collectively access and use social assistance funding for economic, social and/or community development purposes (RCAP, 1998).

Integrated social, economic and employment development strategies.

Breaking the cycle of dependency and alleviating poverty can only be achieved if social and employment development plans are balanced and integrated with long term economic development strategies. These should provide First Nations with the opportunity to use social dollars to generate *sustainable* economic development and employment opportunities. Long term economic development strategies should be sensitive and appropriate to local economic conditions and compatible with community philosophies, culture and values generally, and specifically with respect to:

- community perspectives on lands, resources and the environment and principles governing their sustainable management and use
- community perspectives on the relationship between work, social development and security, as well as community definitions of “work”

Build on Existing Capacity

First Nations must recognize that they already have developed elements of a First Nation social security system. In further evolving these systems, First Nations should build upon existing First Nation institutions, programs, expertise and partnerships. These exist in the areas of social and cultural development, community healing, health and wellness, child and family services, education, training, languages and literacy, housing, economic employment and business development (FSIN, 1998).

Cooperative development work among First Nations.

The work of reforming social security from a First Nations perspective can be advanced through cooperative efforts pursued at a tribal, nation, regional, provincial and the national level. Some of these activities might include:

- a complete review of existing programs, services and institutions for the purposes of rationalization, integration and development of a holistic picture of a First Nation social security net
 - development of broad standards and objectives (this might be combined with the idea of using “charters” and “accords” to frame goals and expectations)
 - discussion of the internal organization of First Nation jurisdiction and responsibilities for social security, including the distribution of power and allocation of responsibilities between First Nation communities, regional, tribal, nation, provincial or national level councils, organizations and institutions
 - strategic development of policies, programs and services in all areas
 - initiatives to facilitate First Nation and community “ownership”, through the organization of First Nation “visioning”, consultation and participation activities, communication and education campaigns and other methods
 - development of strategies to protect First Nations from federal and provincial attempts to “divide and conquer” through the extension of incentives that ultimately threaten jurisdictional, treaty and fiscal rights and positions taken by First Nations
-

First Nation Governance and Legitimacy

In exercising jurisdiction within a First Nation social security net, First Nation governments will be re-assuming a much higher degree of political responsibility than they have enjoyed in the past. First Nation governments will need to sustain “legitimacy” as an element of effective governance in social security. This means they will need to inspire, develop and sustain public confidence in the leadership and institutions, as well as, the policies, programs and services that make up the system. First Nation governments will need to remain responsive to the expectations, priorities, concerns and interests of their people. In addition, to the recognized power, capacity and resources to exercise jurisdiction, legitimacy can be promoted through a number of means. In the overall effort to *build the capacity* of First Nation leaders and governments to design, deliver, monitor and review a social security system, other measures that can enhance the legitimacy of First Nations governance as they go about reclaiming and exercising jurisdiction in the social security field might include some of the following:

- ensuring transparency and accountability for the use and management of the social security system’s fiscal and other resources (human, lands and resources)
 - establishing and communicating a First Nation vision with standards and performance measures for a First Nation social security system
 - establishing and maintaining high quality review, monitoring and data systems to support policy, program and service evaluation and development
 - establishing opportunities, processes, structures and other mechanisms to facilitate the *ongoing* participation of First Nation citizens in all aspects of social security system design, maintenance, operation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment
 - development of *community level charters* setting out rights, responsibilities and standards of social security and well-being; community, regional or national level *accords* that set goals, strategies and standards of conduct for First Nations social security and well-being; and special *healing funds* to which governments and others may contribute, to support capacity building as well as other initiatives.
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Conclusion

The element of Jurisdiction and its relationship to First Nations Social Security is a complex and sometimes complicated phenomenon. The efforts of our research team has brought the above issues to a level that will only be satisfied by dramatic change in the Canadian Government's perspective on Social Security Reform for First Nations. The next phase requires more than words and concepts. It requires a commitment by all involved to put these beliefs into practice. Jurisdiction is a fundamental issue to any Social Security Reform. It requires clear professional relationships with the Canadian Government, solid commitments to First Nations resources and legitimate practice in setting up policies, programs and services. All involved have a responsibility to take these goals seriously and to meet them with commitment and expediency.

As an example, community level charters would ensure a blending of national and regional goals for First Nations by the creation of partnerships. It would be a combination of educational resources, community partnerships and the exercise of self-government that would create a sense of self-sufficiency for First Nations across Canada. However, without first establishing our right to self-government this example and others are diminished in their possibilities for success. This requires the jurisdiction issue to be paramount on the minds of First Nation leader and other framers of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative. Jurisdiction denotes freedom and freedom leads to culturally sound possibilities for Social Security Reform.

A community, a nation or a culture feels the intrinsic nature of true empowerment when the locus of control for one's destiny resides within. Historically the locus of control for First Nations has resided in the Canadian government making First Nations vulnerable to the whims of changing programs, policies and procedures. An external locus of control has created a dependency that neither First Nations nor the Canadian government can credibly afford to sustain. Dependency creates a loss of identity forcing our people to choose between their First Nation identity and a Canadian version of economic, emotional or spiritual well being. For these reasons jurisdictional reform must return the locus of control back to First Nations. A sense of empowerment and historical identity are the true stakeholders in their reform. Jurisdiction reform is an issue that rests as the foundation for other changes in the First Nations Social Security Safety Net.

Chapter 3 First Nation Capacity Building and Social Security Reform

Introduction

Education as a Tool to Empower Nations

Education is viewed by First Nations people as the key to the future. It will give First Nations the ability to address the issues of their communities in the context of the outside world. It will also help develop economies and provide jobs. First Nations communities are predominately young and education is a prime concern as First Nations attempt to ensure that opportunities for education are accessible and equitable.

Low levels of education found among Aboriginal people in First Nation communities leads to unnecessary and unavoidable losses of social and economic benefits, not only to our communities but also to Canada in terms of income and economic well being, (Institute of Urban Studies vol. 1-2). First Nations fare significantly lower than that of the rest of the population. Realistically speaking Aboriginal people would be much better off if they were able to realize their economic potential. In volume 5 of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report Renewal: a Twenty-Year Commitment the authors describe the differences in economic outcomes between Canadians and Aboriginal people. They indicate that the gap in average earnings from employment (including self-employment) for persons aged 15 years and over is significant. As illustrated in Table 1.1 in 1990 Aboriginal people earned an average of \$9,140 or 53.7 per cent of the Canadian average of \$17,020. There are three reasons for this difference: (1) Aboriginal people participated in the labour force at a lower rate (57 per cent compared with 67.9 percent); (2) they experienced a higher unemployment rate (24.6 per cent compared with 10.2 percent); and (3) those who were employed earned less than employed Canadians (\$21,270 compared with \$27,880.00).

Table 3.1

Economic Indicators 1991

	Aboriginal Rate	Canadian Rate
Earnings from employment per person age 15+	\$9,140	\$17,020
Labour force participation (% of population age 15+)	57%	67.9%
Unemployment rate (% of the labour force)	24.6%	10.2%
Earnings from employment per employed person	\$21,270	\$27,880

Source: RCAP Report Vol. 5, Statistics Canada, "Labour Force Activity"

Further described in the RCAP report was the level of education and how that relates to the probability of finding employment and income. The study found that in the case of Aboriginal people, less than half of those with a grade nine education or less were employed at any time in 1990, compared to more than 90 percent of those with a university degree. Average income ranged from less than \$13,000 for those with a grade nine education or less to more than \$33,000 for those with a university degree. This suggests that there is a significant correlation between educational attainment and employment income among Aboriginal people. This further suggests that education is an important lever for improving the economic situation for Aboriginal communities.

Table 3.2

Education and Employment Income Comparison 1991

Highest Level of Education Completed	Aboriginal People (% of pop. Age 15-64)	All Canadians (% of pop. age 15-64)	Average Employment Income Per Aboriginal person (\$000s)
Less than grade 9	25.4	11.8	12.7
Grades 9-13	32.2	22.8	15.3
High School Diploma	12.9	21.3	19.4
College without certificate	8.0	6.2	15.8
College with certificate	14.2	17.9	20.5
University without Degree	4.7	7.9	22.6
University with Degree	2.6	12.2	33.6
Total	100.0	100.0	17.8

Source: RCAP Report Vol. 5 Statistics Canada, "Educational Attainment and School Attendance." and Aboriginal peoples survey

In addition to educational attainment, health and social factors such as disability, conflicts with the law, and ill health are related to economic performance. Any improvement in these areas will be a contributing factor in reducing the economic gap between Aboriginal people and Canadians.

In Table 3.3, the RCAP study found that unemployment rates far out pace that for Canadians and that the average income of Aboriginal people declined in 1991. The reasons for these trends according to the study were a recession in the early 1990's along with loss of jobs and a decline in market prices for goods traditionally traded by Aboriginal people. The economic disadvantages of Aboriginal people are significant. Finding employment in Aboriginal communities is very difficult. Even though in some cases educational attainment has improved slightly over the years, due to greater Aboriginal control in schools; economic

disparities continue to widen. Trends for employment in Aboriginal communities are toward low wage jobs. This results unfortunately in an increase in federal social assistance expenditures.

Table 3.3

Economic Indicators for Aboriginal People and All Canadians Age 15+ 1991

	Aboriginal People (2)	All Canadians (1)	Gap (2-1)
Labour Force participation rate	57.0	67.9	10.9
Unemployment Rate	24.6	10.2	14.4
% with income less than \$10,000	47.2	27.7	19.5
Average total income	\$14,561	\$24,001	\$9,440

Source: RCAP Vol. 5 -Statistics Canada "Canada's Aboriginal Population 1981-1991: A Summary Report"

According to the RCAP report, in addition to relatively low participation rates in education, Aboriginal peoples make up a disproportionate share of the clients of the justice system and of federal, provincial and territorial social and income support programs.

Numerous studies indicate as did the RCAP report, that Aboriginal peoples are frequent users of remedial and financial assistance programs as a direct result of social disintegration within their communities, poverty and racial discrimination. In 1992-93 government expenditures on financial transfers and remedial programs for Aboriginal people far exceeded expenditures for the equivalent number of Canadians by nearly \$2.2 billion. It must not be assumed, although there appears to be high levels of services provided, that the needs of Aboriginal peoples are actually being met. During the RCAP hearings Aboriginal people complained many times about the lack of many services and the difficulties they had in accessing programs.

Given our brief overview of the factors that give cause to large government expenditures on programs for Aboriginal people, if social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people changed significantly for the better, or service programs were more culturally sensitive, these levels of expenditures would decrease significantly and be more closely in line with expenditures of the general Canadian public.

As illustrated in Table 3.4, if no effort is made to reduce the cost of the status quo, it will certainly increase. The largest cost to Aboriginal people and Canadians are the present circumstances that exist in so many Aboriginal communities today. Under better conditions the RCAP authors conclude that Aboriginal people could contribute an additional \$5.8 billion to the Canadian economy. This loss of potential income is a direct result of low Aboriginal participation in the labour force, low educational attainment, high unemployment

and low productivity when employed. The authors conclude that this is no passing phenomenon, "Aboriginal people have been on the fringes of the economy for generations."

Table 3.4

Present and Future Cost to Maintain the Status Quo

	1996	2016
Cost to Aboriginal People		
Forgone earned income	5.8	8.6
Income taxes forgone	-2.1	-3.1
Financial Assistance from governments	-0.8	1.3
Net Income loss of Aboriginal People	2.9	4.3
Cost to Governments		
Expenditures on remedial programs	1.7	2.4
Financial Assistance to Aboriginal People	0.8	1.2
Government revenue forgone	2.1	3.1
Total cost to governments	4.6	6.7
Total cost of the status quo	7.5	11.0

Source: RCAP Volume 5 Renewal: a Twenty Year Commitment

Using demographic projections, it is predicted that by the year 2016 the cost of maintaining the "status quo" will increase by 47 percent from \$7.5 billion to \$11 billion. The cost of the "status quo" is equivalent to nearly one percent of the Canadian GDP. To summarize our findings we believe it is essential that economic opportunities and participation be enhanced so that social conditions will improve and the "status quo" can be reduced.

Empowerment versus Repression

Overview

It is important for First Nations to know that much of what they are experiencing is occurring worldwide. It is clear that people everywhere are determined to gain some measure of control over the forces and conditions most affecting their lives, and that they are no longer willing to remain passive victims of political, economic and social forces. In many places governments have become defensive, rigid and uncompromising in an effort to preserve the system that has given them power. The world's population is increasing by

nearly a billion people a year. Development is not able to keep up with the sheer numbers of people that need food, shelter, medical care and a means to earn their livelihood. The essential problem is that more people need more resources.

The basic social and cultural fibers of communities worldwide are rapidly disintegrating. The signs are everywhere. Large numbers of young people globally feel angry and disconnected from their families, their communities, and for any hope for a healthy and prosperous future. Violent crime; addictions; community and family violence; sexual abuse; divorce; family discourse; and the breakdown of trust, mutual cooperation and a sense of community purpose; are all clear signs of social disintegration. No one is exempt. Settlements in poor Africa, Latin America and Asia, as well as, the urban "jungles" of America are equally stricken. Even the children of the rich have been affected.

What is happening is that within every society and from every walk of life, people are waking up to a number of cultural realities and are beginning to move their thinking and their lives toward the practical realization of a new vision for a sustainable world.

Empowerment for First Nations

The Aboriginal concept of community is very different from the one understood in European culture. The sense of a strong community is traditionally an important part of native culture. There is a greater awareness of the needs of the community and the self is less defined as a separate entity from the community.

The traditional community included everyone, and everyone was assigned a very specific and important role. The social and political structures were based on the clan system, extended families, and a special relationship with the Creator (Clarkson et al., 1992). Decision-making included everyone affected by the decision and decisions made for the family were based on sharing, understanding and the building of consensus. "Personal satisfaction and the collective needs supersede the individual wants."

In traditional Aboriginal society, a functional, caring social welfare system was created based on values stressing the importance of the extended family, collective ownership, sharing, the acceptance of diversity, mutual respect, and a collective responsibility for the well-being of all members of society. The sense of community is promoted through a "spirit of belonging." Many values held by native people grow out of this spirit of belonging, such as:

- Respect for autonomy and the worth of every individual. In return everyone contributes to the work and stability of the community
 - Responsibility and industriousness. Each First Nation member's contribution is important to the success and well being of the community.
 - Group consensus and decision-making. Each person's opinions and contributions are important to the total group.
-

This belief system is important and valuable when dealing with social welfare and social assistance issues. It provides a solid base for developing programs intended to promote self-sufficiency and local empowerment within Aboriginal communities.

First Nation communities recognize the need to balance survival needs with the needs of the family, community and nation. From this concept of balance evolves the 'circle' which dominates Aboriginal culture and traditions, often in the form of a medicine wheel or healing circle. The concept of balance - like that of a community where each person is partially responsible for the community - are ideas that are more than simply one part of Aboriginal culture. They are beliefs which have shaped Aboriginal identity, culture, traditions and behaviors. This means that without understanding this belief structure and taking it into account, programs will invariably fall short of their goals.

Principles

First Nations communities hold at the core of their culture the belief in the strength of individuals and of the entire community. Development is viewed in relation to the settings within which people live and learn. Community development is community based and directed. It is a process that fosters the social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of individuals and entire communities in a holistic and participatory way. Community development principles must guide any change process. They include:

1. **Equity** - all community members should have fair and equitable access to community resources and benefits.
 2. **Participation** - Encourage and support participation by all members of the community in planning and decision-making. Remove any barriers that limit the participation of anyone.
 3. **Community building** - Foster a sense of community where there is acceptance, understanding and mutual respect.
 4. **Cooperation and Collaboration** - encourage linkages, connections and relationships based on cooperation and collaboration.
 5. **Capacity Building** - Emphasize individual and community capacities, abilities and assets rather than needs, deficiencies or problems.
 6. **Self-reliance and Community Control** - Decentralize decision-making in order to strengthen the autonomy of the individual and the community.
 7. **Integration** - Design a holistic approach that addresses the social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of community well being.
 8. **Interdependence** - Recognize the complex web of relationships where decisions in one area may have an impact on another.
-

Building Community Capacity

'Community capacity' refers to the development of the ability or capability of people, organizations and communities to run their programs effectively. Developing skills and competence - developing capacity - is a crucial part of this. If we do not build the skills needed, programs will not succeed.

Building community capacity is an important part of planning for change in the area of social policy. Participation of the community in social policy development will make any programs developed more responsive and more effective.

As a part of capacity building, it is important to identify what is present in the community in terms of the capacities of its membership and existing structures. By focusing on assets, the emphasis is more internal, that is, on using expertise and capabilities from within. In this regard, it is important to constantly be building and rebuilding relationships and strengthening trust within the community. This will lead to effective participation. It will allow the community to resolve difficult issues. It will also enable the community to come together at the end of the day to support the decisions that have been made. This approach will help to ensure success and allow communities to build on their success.

The Process of Strengthening Community Capacity

We have a lot of knowledge and expertise in our First Nation communities that we do not acknowledge or recognize. Mentoring and specialized training programs provided to First Nation communities are options for providing the training and skills for capacity building. The key is ensuring that skills are obtained by a number of community members and that they, in turn, transfer these skills to others.

In the past, there have been significant gaps in services to First Nations. The population being served is geographically dispersed, often with many communities facing major isolation factors. Many communities are far from sources of state of the art services which significantly impacts the socio-economic capabilities of individuals and community members. For example many First Nations experience (as described earlier):

- Significantly lower levels of education
 - Inadequate housing conditions
 - High unemployment
 - Low income levels
 - High levels of welfare dependency
 - Infant mortality
 - High suicide rates particularly among youth
 - High levels of drug and substance abuse
 - Domestic violence
 - Limited access to transportation, health care and economic development opportunities
-

Economic development is critical in enhancing the opportunity for First Nations to change the conditions that exist in their communities. As the opportunity to earn an income increases for individual community members, so do changes to the socio-economic status of the wage earner. Education, training and access to economic opportunity are all essential components to any reform process.

After an extensive review of case studies of tribal economies in the United States the following four areas were identified as being essential for successful economic development:

1. **Political sovereignty:** the degree to which the First Nation has genuine control over decision-making, the use of resources on reserve, and relations with the outside world.
2. **Market Opportunity:** unique economic niches/opportunities in local, regional or national markets resulting from particular assets or attributes such as minerals, tourism, distinctive arts and crafts, or from supportive government policies.
3. **Access to Financial Capital:** the ability of the First Nation to obtain investment dollars from private, government or other sources.
4. **Distance from Markets:** the distance of the First Nation from markets for their products.

Internal assets are also considered to be important factors for success. These are characterized by the First Nation and the resources they control which can be committed to development. According to RCAP, they are as follows:

1. **Natural Resources:** mineral, water, timber, fish, wildlife, scenery, fertile land, oil, gas, etc.
2. **Human Capital:** skills, knowledge, and expertise of labour force acquired through education, training and work experience.
3. **Institutions of Governance:** laws and organization of First Nations from constitutions to legal or business codes to the First Nation bureaucracy. As these institutions become more effective at maintaining a stable and productive environment, the chances of success improve.
4. **Culture:** as the fit between the culture of the community and the structure and powers of the governing institutions become better, the more legitimate the institutions become and the more able they are to regulate and organize the development process.

According to the Institute of Urban Studies (House, 1989) native communities have suffered from the inhibition and suppression of the entrepreneurial spirit. Policy makers would be wise to encourage and support entrepreneurial endeavors. It is far better for the nation and

for Native communities to spend public money to support local enterprise than in government handouts. First Nation communities need the development of economies that will succeed competitively in the twenty-first century (1989).

To stimulate long-term, sustainable employment generation, policy makers and local people need to pay greater attention to innovative forms of organization that would build on area strengths and overcome local weaknesses. Sustainable communities must provide long-term sustainable employment for their citizens. This does not necessarily mean year-round nine-to-five jobs for everybody. Well-paid seasonal employment combined with effective household production and occasional income support during the off-season would be the lot of many people. Much of the employment could be self-employment in primary resource industries such as fishing, hunting, trapping and logging, and in local service industries such as shops and garages.

According to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (June, 1996; Istanbul, Turkey), integrated approaches to rural development significantly improve the quality of life in many third world countries. For example, in Kibwezi, Kenya where drought, erosion and overpopulation took their toll on the lands of the Kamba families, women were often left to fend for themselves as menfolk went off in search of employment. An integrated development program was implemented with the Council of Human Ecology - Kenya. The women were empowered to sustain themselves and their children through training in traditionally male-dominated skills: bee keeping and earth-block making. Livestock entrepreneurial projects were also implemented and are now self-sustaining.

In Nyeri District, Kenya, Mbatia Women's groups were started in the early 1960's for poor and uneducated women. A top priority was to improve the quality of their houses. Traditionally, Kikuyu roofs were made of thatched grass. However, two factors made the women consider improved roofing technology: grass for thatching was becoming increasingly scarce, and had the tendency to rot. The women decided to roof their house with "mbatia" (iron sheets) and make other housing improvements, replacing walls and fencing for their homesteads. They then undertook economic activities, including sewing and knitting classes for girls, and the establishment of a revolving loan fund to assist members. The fund enabled women to educate their children and buy property. There are currently over 1,200 largely self-supporting women's groups now in Nyeri.

One final example is the "Don't Move, Improve" project, a community owned and governed urban revitalization initiative in the South Bronx area of New York City in the U.S.A. The program implements comprehensive community development linking health, day care, economic development, housing, environment, transport and capital development. Achievements included: raising or leveraging \$100 million of investment in the community; rehabilitating or constructing 25,000 units of safe, affordable housing; technical and financial support of 125 small businesses; and developing the South Bronx Community Health Project for pediatric and adolescent and health care.

Based on the above-described international experiences, we have learned that innovative education, training and economic development initiatives can change the existence of a family, community or whole nation. In addition, educators are learning that the process of schooling to be effective must be a preparation for the world of work. Throughout history we know that impoverished children have received in most cases separate and unequal schooling. Most students experienced insufficient support in school and as a result failed to develop adequate academic and social skills. Quality of health, family characteristics, peer influences, community climate, prenatal conditions and social status influence these children's readiness for school. According to the U.S. Study Education Reforms and Students at Risk the following things can be done to reduce the environmental risks for impoverished children. They are as follows:

- Improve health, nutrition and prenatal care programs e.g. increased availability of immunization against childhood diseases; health clinics for school aged children; school-based teen health clinics; children's mental health care.
- Strengthening Families and preventing abuse e.g. expansion of parent education and child abuse prevention program; creation of social service policies that promote rather than penalize two-parent households; parenting and employment programs for teen parents; strict enforcement of child support laws.
- Expansion of youth programs e.g. school-based programs that offer before and after-school care
- Increased school, community and parent collaborations e.g. increased involvement of businesses, parents and community groups in counseling; dropout prevention and apprenticeship programs
- Community development and social change e.g. rebuilding the sense of community and family values; expansion of economic opportunities in impoverished areas; promoting "community empowerment;" encouraging youth to volunteer and become positively involved in their communities.

Additionally, it is important to recognize the effect of the students' background on their "readiness to learn," and on the other side of things, the school's "readiness to teach." Proposals to enhance the school environment for children from diverse backgrounds are:

- Improvement in school administrative and support services e.g. improved psychological and guidance counseling; flexible schedules for teen mothers and working students; and support for highly mobile students
 - Enhanced relevance and rigor of instruction e.g. using the cultural knowledge that children bring to the classroom to build their skill acquisition; culturally relevant curriculum; high academic expectations; sensitivity to differences in learning styles and heterogeneous instructional groupings.
-

ABORIGINAL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Equitable and efficient use of resources e.g. increased funding for schools; targeting resources to attract better school staff and teaching materials.

Finally, to create a challenging, non-stigmatizing environment that meets student needs, policy makers need to consider the following (U.S. Department of Education, 1994):

- Changes to curriculum e.g. focus on real world experiences to attract student interest; integration of academic and vocational skills so that students are well prepared for both college and the job market.
- Changes to instruction e.g. adults as mentors or advocates; provision of race-sex role models; cooperative learning; peer tutors and mentors; one-on-one tutoring; using computer programs to develop higher order thinking skills rather than simply as basic skill drills.
- Changes in assessment, e.g. "alternative" or "authentic assessments; assessment and recognition of incremental student progress.
- Closer connections with work or college e.g. university outreach to students; school-to-work apprenticeship programs.

In a national research study conducted by the U.S. Department of Labour in Washington, DC. Learning for Living: a Blueprint for High Performance (1992) workplace and foundations skills were identified as part of a foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance. These were:

Workplace Competencies

- Resources - knowing how to allocate time, money, materials, space and staff.
 - Interpersonal Skills - being able to work on teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
 - Information - knowing how to acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.
 - Systems - understanding social, organizational, and technological systems; can monitor and correct performance; and can design or improve systems.
 - Technology - can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.
-

Foundation Skills

- Basic Skills - reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening.
- Thinking Skills - the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions and to solve problems.
- Personal Qualities - individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability and integrity.

As a qualifier to their findings, the authors of this U.S. study addressed the issue of equity and diversity. They stated that "children vary, not only as individuals but also as members of different cultural, racial and ethnic groups. Education and training efforts must respond to three basic elements that contribute to this diversity:

1. Differences in family income. Children of poverty are an increasing proportion of the school population; and family and community problems place a growing burden on the schools that serve them.
2. Limited English-speaking proficiency. Job skills often require know-how in English. Schools must develop these skills in a linguistically and culturally sensitive manner. Teachers must use approaches that respect personal interactions across cultures and cultural patterns of dealing with authority and responding to family obligations.
3. Differences in Learning Styles. Education must begin with the realization that there are many paths to the same goal; that assessments should play to students' strengths, not their weaknesses; and that tests should not needlessly penalize student who need more time, are unconventional thinkers, or are bored by multiple-choice tests. "

"Variation and diversity are not enemies of high quality education," according to the U.S. study. The enemy is rigid insistence on a factory model of schooling, a prescription for failure that refuses to accommodate diversity or allow those students with special strengths to function

To bring this discussion back to the Canadian context it is essential that First Nations, government and policy makers consider the aforementioned initiatives and proposals as a new way of educating First Nations learners. Education is a lifelong process and the initiatives described herein are an integral part to First Nation capacity building. If our children, youth, adults, women and elders are not given the opportunity to learn new skills the ability of our First Nation communities to develop, heal, expand and prepare for the 21st century will be greatly inhibited.

Because of illiteracy, poverty, lack of opportunity, unemployment, and a myriad of other social and economic factors, First Nations (and Canada) loses billions of dollars each year in the form of lost production time and income. The guiding principles of the Canadian Charter

of Rights and Freedoms recognize the equality of every individual and opposes all forms of discrimination. Thus everyone has a right to a decent quality of life and access to the basic needs for living. In addition, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 22 states that:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and free development of his personality.

We must support the development of First Nations that involves a framework of resources. We must also ensure that First Nations have the ability to build a capacity to ensure that all members of each First Nation community can exercise their social rights within society in an equal manner without discrimination and without fear of rejection or reprisal.

The following are examples of successful programs where community, social development and capacity building can be facilitated (INAC, 1995). They are characterized by:

1. Voluntary participation of the program participants - voluntary participation in programs provides a sufficient means to motivate individuals.
 2. Programs are designed for specific users and tailored to fit each client's needs - the appropriateness of program design can effect participation rates. For example:
 - a) Using well-defined procedures for staff recruitment, training, supervision and evaluation;
 - b) Establishing effective screening and participant selection criteria;
 - c) Maintaining high staff expectations and quality of service;
 - d) Taking a holistic approach to program planning which recognizes the interrelated elements necessary to move from dependency to economic self sufficiency;
 - e) Using personalized planning including the use of pre-vocational services such as literacy training, detoxification and personal counseling;
 - f) Creating coordinated, flexible and cooperative approaches to training and services that can help participants overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency.
 3. Offering Sequential Programs which offer flexibility - programs offered in sequence according to the needs of the participant increase the potential for success in employability projects. For example:
 - a) Life-skills training
 - b) Job-search training
 - c) Job-maintenance training
 - d) Follow-up counseling
 - e) An internship or practice job placement that build client experience and confidence with relatively low risk (ERN, 1995)
-

4. Providing training that is relevant and applicable - for example, the use of workplace training often proves more effective than institutional training alone, especially for high school drop outs who tend to equate classroom learning with failure.
5. Building in incentives and providing solid opportunities for participants - a strong economic policy is required which provides jobs so that the potential for success of human capital development is not diminished.

To ensure the success of First Nation capacity building programming the following model is proposed to ensure that programs meet First Nations needs:

- utilization of the extended family and reimbursing them for their assistance
- allowing accountability to be based in the community and to its membership
- linking the program to some community benefit or work experience component
- providing incentives for traditional work activities
- ensuring flexibility in order to develop a strong sense of self
- providing child care and linking family and children services to the program
- incorporating a more holistic model to encourage more interactions among staff, membership and decision-makers
- respecting the common knowledge that exists in communities regarding needs

According to Canada's report on Work force Literacy, technology is changing the way people in Canada work. Computers are familiar pieces of equipment in most work places and workers are required to learn new tasks as a result of technology. With more international competition than ever before, Canada's industries must rely on new technologies to be competitive in the world marketplace. Jobs are more complicated and workers everywhere have to learn new skills.

Skilled workers and companies are also required to increase the capacity of First Nations within the context of the Canadian economy. First Nations will have to provide future workers with training as part of a lifelong process, so that they do not get lost in the technological shuffle. Well-educated and well-trained workers are essential to ensure First Nations will have a place on the cutting edge of the economy.

First Nations face a literacy challenge. Those who cannot read or write, and whose skills are only basic must make a commitment to keep learning just to keep up with the technological changes of Canadian society. Even people who are highly educated must make sure their skills are kept up to date. Technology and research are changing the landscape of the world every day.

As we know, unemployment rates are high within First Nation communities. "Enabling" skills are required to ensure unemployed workers develop the capacity to get new jobs as the work force changes around them. For example, to work in the building construction and maintenance field the "enabling skills" required to do these jobs are reading blueprints and manuals, understanding cost estimates and following directions. The "enabling skills" for the "new world of work" include reading, writing, numeracy, listening, computer literacy

and the ability to process new information and solve problems (NLS, 1990). Workers who lack a good educational background won't be able to keep up with technological change. For example, workers with a grade nine education or less cannot compete in the job market compared to a worker with some university education.

Table 3.5

Proportion of Special Groups with less than a High School Education

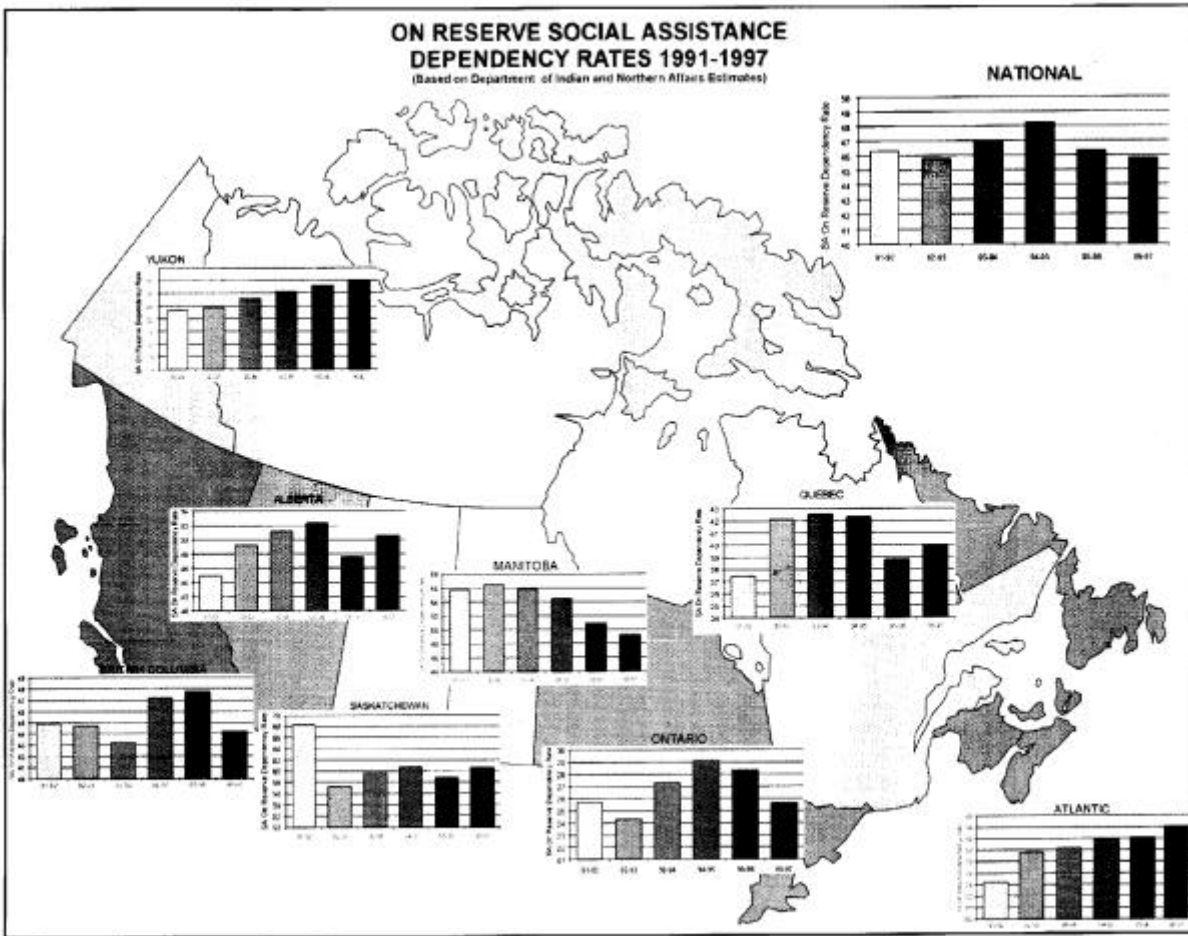
Youth (age 15-19 not attending school full time)	66.4%
Older Persons Age 45-54	54.4%
Age 55-64	62.3%
Native People	71.3%
People with Disabilities * (84.6% of people with disabilities have high school graduation or less, and 43.5 completed less than grade 9)	High *
Total Population, 15 years and older	47.5%

Source: Economic Council of Canada Making Technology Work

Employment and Immigration Canada estimates that two-thirds of the new jobs that will be created by the year 2000 will require more than 12 years of education. Nearly half of these jobs will require more than 17 years of education. Individuals wishing to enter the work force will have to be more literate than ever before. A study of the Economic Council of Canada showed that government programs put more emphasis on supporting people who have lost their source of income than on training people so they can avoid being without a job. Canada needs "employment insurance" as well as unemployment insurance.

In conclusion, nations with the best-educated and best-trained work forces will prosper in a world that is now "more reliant on brains than muscle." In Japan companies such as Honda have used technology, team work and worker involvement in suggesting innovative processes and quality control to improve their cars' styling, performance and price. Honda's success has been worker's diagnostic and problem solving abilities; and literacy has been key to these skills. Japan estimates that less than one-half of one percent of its people are illiterate. Our challenge now is to somehow stay in step with the changes that are taking place around us.

Figure 3.1 Social Assistance Dependency Rates



Chapter 4 Self-Sufficiency and Social Security Reform

Introduction

This chapter deals with self-sufficiency and the development of a comprehensive and culturally appropriate social security system for First Nations people in Canada. It has been organized into four sections as follows:

Definitions and Framework

In order to provide principles and strategies for enhancing self-sufficiency in the context of an effective social security system, it is important to articulate clear working definitions of both of these key terms and to develop an integrative framework to guide future development.

Prosperity

This section includes a brief review of the process whereby First Nations people were transformed from prosperous nations to a state of dependency, as well as, a discussion of the principles and strategies which can guide the journey of these same communities back toward true material and social wealth.

Well being

The well being section will outline the determinants of well-being for First Nations communities, their current status with respect to these determinants, and the personal and community healing journey which must be undertaken in order to restore them to vibrant health.

Recommendations

Key recommendations for the development of a social security system for First Nations communities which promotes self-sufficiency, well-being and prosperity are outlined in this section.

Terms definition and framework

As stated above, it is important to understand just what is meant by the terms "social security" and "self-sufficiency" to explore how they can reinforce each other. In the

context of the Aboriginal Strategies Initiative, it is understood that one of the goals of an effective social security system should be to assist individuals, families, communities and whole nations to move away from harmful forms of dependency to self-sufficiency and prosperity. In examining how this might occur, we begin by discussing how self-sufficiency might look in the context of present-day Canadian Aboriginal communities and the type of social security system which could be developed to promote that goal.

Background

The Canadian social security system is usually thought of as a bundle of rights and programs that collectively constitute a "social safety net." The metaphor "safety net" is instructive. It implies that normally people have what they need, and that the net is an insurance against catastrophe that someone "falls" from the platform of "normal" self-reliance and prosperity. The Canadian social safety net is a blend of income security, health and social insurance programs and a constantly changing array of "social adjustment" services, designed to help those who are having difficulty staying on the platform to "adjust" to mainstream expectations.

The principal mechanisms of the Canadian social security system include social assistance, employment insurance, the Canada Health Plan, the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans, Old Age Security and guaranteed income supplements for seniors, housing programs for low income people, and a transient array of other programs that come and go depending on political spending priorities and available cash, including education and training subsidies, tax credits, and programs aimed at helping "disadvantaged" groups to find their place within the mainstream of Canadian social and economic life.

A basic assumption of the Canadian social security system is that less than ten percent of the population will ever really need the safety net, and that between ninety and ninety-three percent will remain healthy and secure in their place on the platform of mainstream prosperity. The Faculty of Social Work at the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College found that in many Aboriginal communities these figures are reversed. In other words, over ninety percent of the population would have to be categorized as being "out of the mainstream" in terms of their current reliance on social assistance, housing subsidies and other aspects of the social safety net.

This means that the Canadian social security system is not currently functioning in Aboriginal communities as a safety net for a small group of especially vulnerable people, but rather that dependence on its services in some way for meeting day-to-day needs has become a way of life for the majority of the population. There is virtually unanimous agreement that this dependency is having devastating consequences on the social, economic, political and cultural life of First Nations communities.

In the face of these realities, it is clear that merely adjusting the Canadian social security system for Aboriginal communities has not, and will not, work. Aboriginal social security

reform will need to begin by re-conceptualizing what social security actually means for Aboriginal people. The role of a social security system can no longer be viewed as the provision of stop-gap programs and services for a small group of disadvantaged people, but rather must be conceived of as a comprehensive approach to building well-being and prosperity for all. Seen in this light, social security can be defined as what the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples refers to as "whole health:" ... good health is not simply the outcome of illness care and social welfare services. It is the outcome of living actively, productively and safely, with reasonable control over the forces affecting everyday life, with the means to nourish body and soul, in harmony with one's neighbor and oneself, and with hope for the future of one's children and one's land. In short, good health is the outcome of living well (RCAP, 1998).

What is Social Security?

Social security for Aboriginal people must promote and "secure" a way of life that produces "whole health," broadly defined as human well being and prosperity. Such a concept goes far beyond more money and program-based solutions.

When conceived in this way, the delivery of programs to and for communities (no matter how generously funded or effectively designed) can never bring "social security" to Aboriginal people. Until Aboriginal communities can recover an adequate measure of the wealth they possessed, true "social security" will continue to be an illusive goal. Traditionally, wealth existed in two inter-related forms:

1. **A sustainable economic base** - This entailed a complex system of relationships, technologies and wisdom that made it possible for sustainable wealth (i.e. the means to provide food, clothing, shelter, medicines and other material needs) to be produced and shared among the people.
 2. **Healthy human relationships** - This entailed culturally generated pathways of opportunity for self-development, but more fundamentally it involved a rich and complex web of human interaction that made healthy family and community life possible. These relationships contributed to and preserved the social and economic well being of the people. They also provided a dependable safety net for those who fell upon hard times for whatever reasons. Love, sharing and caring animated this safety net, and it was maintained through healthy relationships of respect, trust and mutual responsibility as well as through effective leadership. These community capacities are sometimes referred to as "social capital". What is implied by conceptualizing social security in the way described here is that in addition to certain financial security and "social adjustment" programs, it will be critical to invest in the rebuilding of the fundamental relationships that generate and protect human well-being. Only then can a sustainable system of "social security" be built for Canadian Aboriginal communities.
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What is Self-Sufficiency?

Literally, "self-sufficiency" means depending on no one but one's self for one's needs. The indigenous view of the universe places human beings within an inter-dependent web of life. Within that way of seeing things, healthy human beings both receive from and contribute to the rest of life. We are inter-dependent beings.

In this chapter, the term "self-sufficiency" takes on a different meaning than its literal definition. It is used as a political and economic term that makes sense in reference to the history of colonization, degradation and dependency on the power and wealth of other peoples which Canadian Aboriginal people have experienced. In this context, "self-sufficiency" has come to mean the opposite of this type of destructive dependency.

A review of the studies carried out for the Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives project, found that the concept of "self-sufficiency" is generally means that people are able to meet their basic needs for well-being without having to be provided for out of the wealth controlled by others. Self-sufficiency then is predicated on the idea that a people have control over the resources they need and they have the capacities they require to produce their own wealth in order to meet their own needs and to participate meaningfully in regional, national or global economic activities.

"Self-sufficiency" means prosperity and well being for all. For this reason, The main body of the report is organized around these two primary themes: Prosperity, and Well Being.

A Framework for Transformation

Many of the authors of our research either inferred or called for:

- the creation of a system of social security promotion that steps outside the current patterns of the Canadian social security system
- a conceptualization of social security that moves away from individual entitlement and toward integrated human and community well-being, calling for social and economic development as a primary thrust of a reformed aboriginal social security system

In order to move from current communities to a condition in which prosperity and well-being have been "secured" will require a fundamental transformation of political, economic, social and cultural conditions and relationships both within communities and between Aboriginal communities and the rest of Canada. What is needed is a comprehensive framework for understanding what has to be and how that change process must be promoted if prosperity and well being are to be the outcome. It is critical to have a clear vision of what we are changing before we leap into the process.

It is also crucial to remember that a vision of development that leads to sustainable well being and prosperity for Aboriginal communities can never be a one-size-fits-all proposition. What is needed is guiding principles that can be applied and adapted to fit a multitude of situations.

Principles to Guide Transformation

We recommend four fundamental principles to guide change. These principles were given by Aboriginal elders in a series of consultative meetings on Aboriginal community healing and development.

1. **Development comes from within** - Well-being and prosperity cannot be delivered to communities. It has to be grown from within people, from the very spiritual core of their beings; from within families and from within processes of civic engagement. This principle underscores the vital importance of fostering the de-colonization and empowerment of community people and their active and meaningful participation in visualizing and building the future. This principle is about power. Power over the people needs to be exchanged for power together with the people, guided by the power of spiritual insight and unity. This principle implies that to achieve social security, a massive effort of engaging ordinary Aboriginal in collective process of healing, learning, consultation and action are required. Top-down efforts must now be met by the revitalization of civil society in First Nation communities. Facilitating this process will be a key challenge facing Aboriginal leadership everywhere.
 2. **No Vision; no development** - A vision of who we can become and what a sustainable world would be like works as a powerful magnet, drawing us to our potential. Where there is no vision, there is no development. It is only when we are able to see ourselves in terms of our potential and within healthier and more sustainable conditions that we begin to move towards creating those conditions within ourselves and in our relationships with the world around us. This principle implies that the work of imagining what prosperity and well being would actually look like, and what the path to achieve it would be in any particular community, is of paramount importance. All visions are not equal. The process of helping communities and nations to develop a viable vision of a healthy and prosperous future, one that the people actually believe in and feel committed to working toward, is of the essence of transformation.
 3. **Personal and Community Development must go Hand-in-Hand** - Healthy and prosperous nations are the natural result of healthy and prosperous people. Social security reform must focus both on personal growth, healing and learning, and on the transformation of community structures, power arrangements, institutions, organizations, policies and patterns. These two dimensions are inter-related and inseparable.
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4. **Learning is the key that unlocks the door of change-** Individuals, families, organizations, whole communities and nations of people can learn. We have learned to live as we do now, and we can learn to do, think and live differently. While we may not be able to control others, we can control our own responses and choices, and we can use processes of healing and learning to build our individual and collective capacity for achieving well-being and prosperity.

The Problem

It is obvious that Canada's First Nations traditionally had their own social security systems. Indeed, it would be impossible for a nation to thrive without one. Although the specifics differed, all First Nations communities had mechanisms for fostering the general well being of their members and for caring for the most vulnerable during difficult times. The following are examples of the features of a traditional aboriginal social organization which constituted a type of social security system:

- living was a right for all members of the community rather than merely for a few good hunters;
- an equitable and effective system for sharing or distributing wealth;
- a way of life based on self-sufficiency;
- a system of political and social organization which promoted individual and communal wellness and harmony;
- a recognition of communal responsibilities and obligations;
- a holistic viewpoint which recognized physical (e.g. food and shelter), mental (i.e. learning), spiritual and emotional needs as inter-related aspects total well-being;

- a recognition of the inter-relationship between lands and natural resources and the social development of the people; and
- customs and practices which were designed to maintain the integrity of First Nations societies.

Some of the problems which arose when these traditional social security systems were replaced, through the colonization process, with dependence on the institutionalized social security programs of the Canadian government will be briefly discussed on a later section. The task of building an effective social security system for First Nations communities already has a strong foundation in terms of traditional values and teachings.

A. PROSPERITY

The term "prosperity" for our purposes refers to the capacity of people to produce their own (sustainable) wealth and to use wealth in such a way that:

- The material needs of all the people are met.
 - A reasonable level of comfort is achieved for all.
 - The process of creating wealth and distributing it is guided by the principle of justice.
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- The process of creating and distributing wealth does not diminish or undermine human beings.
- The process of creating and distributing wealth does not diminish or undermine the capacity of the natural environment or the potential for prosperity of future generations.

The traditional roots of prosperity grew out of two interdependent sources: (a) family and community life; and (b) the relationship people maintained with the land.

Processes that Undermined Traditional Prosperity

The primary processes of wealth production rooted in family-based on-the-land activities were taken away from Aboriginal people through the following means:

- alienating people from their traditional territories and land base;
- establishing legal and policy barriers preventing Aboriginal people from access to their traditional resource base (game, fisheries, forestry, agricultural, etc.)
- forcing Aboriginal people onto relatively small and marginal land reserves
- breaking culturally-based economic patterns through residential school, missions, and restrictive administrative policy

When a people have no economic base, nor the social capital to develop one, they have no recourse but dependency. Dependency patterns started to emerge as dominant trends in the 1940s and were well established in the 1960s. The totality of dependency experienced by many Aboriginal people is staggering. Much of the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical life of people became dependent on welfare, alcohol and drugs, and learned helplessness. Much of the political, economic, social and cultural life of communities was also devastated by political weakness, corruption, economic dependency on government transfer payments, cultural shame and self-depreciation and social disintegration. Within this total paralysis many people now seem unable to imagine, much less to create, prosperity for themselves. The concept "self-sufficiency" is even regarded as a threat by some to personal and community entitlement. Such is the challenge of moving toward self-reliance and prosperity.

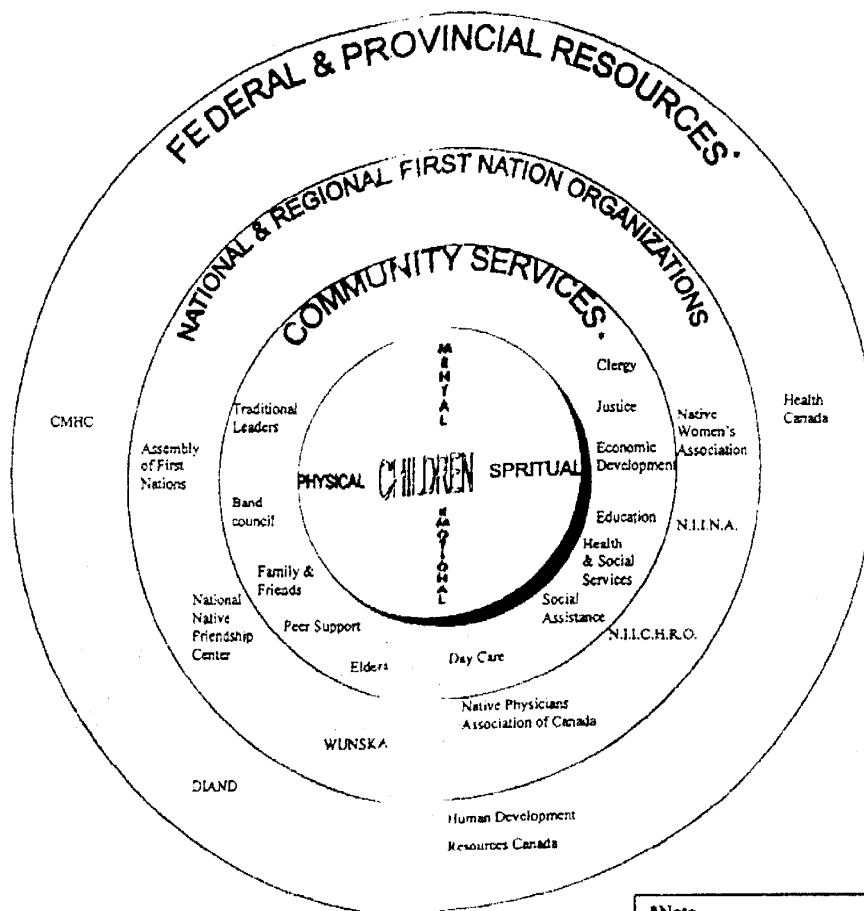
Key Ingredients for Prosperity-Based Reform

The following key ingredients are needed in reform process aimed at helping Aboriginal communities move toward prosperity.

- Increase the economic base of each nation in terms of lands, access to resources, or alternative sources of capital.
 - Invest heavily and consistently in community healing and community empowerment.
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- Invest in capacity-building and training, not only for employment, but also for governance, healing and community development
- Regain control (de facto) and jurisdiction (legal) over development processes, so that the entire cycle is in Aboriginal hands.
- Develop leadership capable of guiding economic development (both wealth production and equitable distribution) in ways that prevent abuse of power, political interference, and corruption.
- Develop and strengthen civil society (the voluntary sector) and the private sector business within Aboriginal nations so that government is not the only force working for development, but rather is one of a group of partners, each of which is a driving force in its own right.

Figure 4.1 Circle of Care



The circle works inwards, each level supports the next in addressing the needs of children and their families

***Note**
There are no divisions/ barriers, which prevent services from working together. Each level has a purpose and responsibility

A shift from an individual entitlement to a community well-being focus, which implies that:

- The most vulnerable and the poorest must become the mutual responsibility of the community and not only "the government;" "their" responsibility must become "our" responsibility.
- No one is "entitled" to a free ride.
- Everyone must contribute to the well being of the community in so far as they are able.

B. WELL BEING

If the goal of an effective social security system is to promote sustainable well being and prosperity at the level of individuals, families, communities and nations, then it is important to describe what that well being would look like. On the basis of our fieldwork and consultations with First Nations communities, we have synthesized the following list of fourteen prerequisites of well being for Aboriginal communities.

1. **Basic physical needs** - adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, pure drinking water, sanitary waste disposal and access to medical services.
 2. **Spirituality and a sense of purpose** - connection to the Creator and a clear sense of purpose and direction in individual, family and community life, as well as in the collective life of the nation.
 3. **Life-sustaining values, morals and ethics** - guiding principles and a code of conduct that informs choices in all aspects of life so that at the level of individuals, families, institutions and whole communities, people know which pathways lead to human well-being, and which to misery, harm and death.
 4. **Safety and security** - freedom from fear, intimidation, threats, violence, criminal victimization, and all forms of abuse both within families and homes and in all other aspects of the collective life of the people.
 5. **Adequate income and sustainable economics** - access to the resources needed to sustain life at a level that permits the continued development of human well-being, as well as processes of economic engagement that are capable of producing sustainable prosperity.
 6. **Adequate power** - a reasonable level of control and voice in shaping one's life and environment through processes of meaningful participation in the political, social and economic life of one's community and nation.
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7. **Social justice and equity** - a fair and equitable distribution of opportunities for all, as well as sustainable mechanisms and processes for re-balancing inequities, injustices and injuries that have or are occurring.
 8. **Cultural integrity and identity** - pride in heritage and traditions, access to and utilization of the wisdom and knowledge of the past, and a healthy identification with the living processes of one's own culture as a distinct and viable way of life for individuals, families, institutions, communities and nations.
 9. **Community solidarity and social support** - to live within a unified community that has a strong sense of its common oneness and within which each person receives the love, caring and support they need from others.
 10. **Strong families and healthy child development** - families that are spiritually centered, loving, unified, free from addictions and abuse, and which provide a strong focus on supporting the developmental needs of children from the time of conception through the early years and all the way through the time of childhood and youth.
 11. **Healthy eco-system and a sustainable relationship between human beings and the natural world** - the natural world is held precious and honored as sacred by the people. It is understood that human beings live within nature as fish live within water. The air we breath, the water we drink, the earth that grows our food and the creatures we dwell among and depend on for our very lives are all kept free from poisons, disease and other dangers. Economic prosperity is never sought after at the expense of environmental destruction. Rather, human beings work hand-in-hand with nature to protect, preserve and nurture the gifts the Creator has given.
 12. **Critical learning opportunities** - consistent and systematic opportunities for continuous learning and improvement in all aspects of life, especially those connected to key personal, social and economic challenges communities are facing, and those which will enhance participation in civil society.
 13. **Adequate human services and social safety net** - programs and processes to promote, support and enhance human healing and social development, as well as to protect and enable the most vulnerable to lead lives of dignity and to achieve adequate levels of well-being.
 14. **Meaningful work and service to others** - Opportunities for all to contribute meaningfully to the well-being and progress of their families, communities, nations, as well as to the global human family.
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Current Conditions with Respect to the Determinants of Well-being

While it is important to recognize that conditions vary considerably from community to community, the evidence is clear that many of Canada's Aboriginal people live in circumstances which do not meet these basic requirements for well being. Space does not permit an exhaustive list of these conditions, but a few illustrative examples, dealing with several of the determinants listed above.

- The life expectancy for First Nations people is seven years less than that for other Canadians.
- Infant mortality rates among Aboriginal people are two to three times higher than those for the general Canadian population.
- The suicide rate for registered Indian youth is six times higher than the national rate.
- A case study in Manitoba estimated that the proportion of school-aged children affected by FAS was between 28 - 72 per 1000, compared to a worldwide incidence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome at roughly 1.9 per 1,000.
- Four percent of First Nations children were in the custody of Child and family Service agencies in 1993/94.
- Incarceration rates of Aboriginal people are 5 - 6 times higher than the national average.
- parenting challenges - In 1998, 8% of Aboriginal mothers were under 18 years old and more than 50% were under 25 years old. Almost 25% of First Nation families in urban areas are headed by a lone parent.
- Fifty-two percent of Aboriginal household live in homes that fall below one or more of the housing standards as compared to 32% for non-Aboriginal households.
- Literacy in the First Nations population is half the national average.
- Environmental degradation has affected the physical and psychological health and economic well being of Aboriginal people in many communities.

Five Essential Elements for Personal, Family and Community Healing

This section briefly summarizes the essential elements that must be present in some way in every authentic personal and community-healing process designed to create sustainable prosperity and well being.

- Sanctuary
- Leadership and mentoring
- Telling the story
- Learning new relationships and building capacity for a new life
- Building new patterns of life

1. Sanctuary

The word sanctuary means a safe place, a refuge that is respected and protected because it is held sacred. In community healing processes, the need for sanctuary takes several

forms. Individuals need the refuge of a loving and a trustworthy group of people who will listen with an open heart and provide both unconditional acceptance and honest feedback as the person struggles to re-orient their inner and outer lives to wellness. Individuals seeking healing desperately need protection from further abuse and re-traumatization, an opportunity to share their story and to discharge strong feelings of shame and pain associated with experiences from the past as well as stable role models or reference points of wellness against which they can measure their progress on their healing journey.

Communities in recovery also need sanctuary. Most Aboriginal communities suffering from the full range of trauma, loss, abuse, addiction and co-dependency are not particularly safe and pleasant social environments to live within. Indeed, many community people compare them to war zones, filled with backbiting, criticism, lies, personal attacks, accusations, power struggles, retaliation and a wide range of abuse ranging from the abuse of children and women within families to the abuse of rank and power at the highest levels of the political and economic pyramid. Healing a whole community system means shifting the collective patterns of behavior (personal, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, etc.) so that they produce well being and prosperity rather than misery, suffering and death.

In order to make this shift, a group of people within the larger community pattern will have to create a sanctuary - a refuge place – within which it is safe to dream, to envision a healthy future, to strategically critique current conditions and community relationships and to build the positive alternative. Within such a community sanctuary, it must be possible to do personal healing work, but also to move beyond the personal level to the work of creating a post-trauma self (i.e. identity, purpose, boundaries, and moral framework) that can eventually grow to include everyone in a transformed and healthy community.

The primary function of the community sanctuary is to create a seed crystal of change; a small living model of the healthy community being created. This sanctuary within the dysfunction and hurt of the larger community gradually builds a new pattern of life. It generates economic opportunities; it creates mechanisms for community participation in shaping and directing social and economic development processes, it provides healing and learning opportunities for all who enter into the new pattern, it promotes a new more life-sustaining morality and self-discipline, and it serves as an educator of the whole community system by modeling what needs to occur. Its power is the power of unity, of love and of attraction. It wins others to the new pattern because it demonstrates new possibilities rather than preaching, pressuring or attempting to force others to change, and in time, it succeeds in winning most people over because everyone can clearly see that well-being and prosperity are better than disease, misery and hopelessness.

2. Leadership and Mentoring

If Aboriginal communities knew how to find their way out of the tangled web of addiction, dependency, dysfunction and hurt they are now experiencing, they would have

long ago done so. In the process of individual healing, people often need to enter into a working relationship with a counselor or some kind of therapeutic mentor. This is especially true if individuals have been severely traumatized. The role of a therapeutic or mentoring relationship can be summarized as follows:

- To provide a "healing environment" - a relationship of safety within which people can begin to let down their protective armor, do basic healing work and also work on the task of constructing a post-trauma self that is healthy, self-reliant and moving towards the realization of their potential as a human being.
- To manage the process of healing both because the mentor understands the various stages and requirements for growth and because traumatized people are often unable to manage their own healing process until they have "detoxified" from the hurts of the past and learned new patterns of response and interaction.
- To serve as a mirror in helping people see their own patterns. To break through denial, and to learn the difference between healthy and unhealthy responses.
- To ensure the healing process doesn't re-traumatize the person, reinforce negative thinking patterns and behaviors, or create further dependency rather than moving the person toward self-reliant well being.

Similarly, entire community systems in many Aboriginal communities have been severely traumatized and are unable to manage their own collective recovery process. Just as traumatized, addicted or otherwise disabled individuals need a therapeutic or mentoring relationship to find their way back to health, we find that dysfunctional community systems need specialized leadership and mentoring in order to begin to transforming the primary patterns of life that are keeping the community dysfunctional.

Two kinds of leadership are needed:

- a. **Healing leadership from within** - Within many Aboriginal communities, there already exist a significant number of individuals who have begun their own healing journey. Some of those are already reaching out to others. Some are spiritual leaders and elders who gladly give of themselves and who share the wisdom and knowledge they have been given on their own journey. Very often, the healing leadership of a community is marginal in terms of political and economic power. And yet, when this leadership, along with those people who have begun their own healing journey, band together and work with intention and clarity to create a community sanctuary, the results can be remarkable.
 - b. **Outside coaching and mentoring** - In our review of community change processes and models, we could not find a single transformational process anywhere on earth that was not either stimulated or in some way supported and aided by outside helpers. Most often, successful change processes need mentoring over an extended period of time by a group of competent, caring, and consistent outside resource
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providers. This group usually plays a key role in the community learning process that is parallel to that played by therapeutic mentors and guides on the individual healing journey.

3. Telling the Story

Individuals who have experienced profound loss, abuse or other kinds of trauma need to acknowledge the hurt they have experienced to themselves and be heard and supported by others as they discharge feelings such as grief, shame, anger or despair. Often people need to tell the story of what happened to them over and over again in order to push past the denial and move on to re-framing (i.e. giving new meaning, new understanding to the events of the past to allow the person to move on to rebuilding their lives). In order to tell their story, people need to feel safe. That is why the establishment of a sanctuary in the form of a therapeutic or mentoring relationship, support group or some other holding environment is so important.

Communities also need to tell their story. Just like individuals, communities have a shared story that is collectively and unconsciously acted out. Facilitating a process of a bringing people together to surface the communities story and to "rewrite it" so that the community can begin to live a wellness and prosperity story rather than a dependency and disability story is an essential part of the healing process.

4. Learning New Relationships and Building Capacity for a New Life

Four important kinds of learning are needed in community healing processes.

- a. Reconnecting** - People need to reconnect with themselves and each other in ways that move them beyond feelings of unworthiness, isolation, mistrust, and helplessness to creating bonds of trust and mutual aid. Sometimes this means learning what it means to be a healthy human being—a process that often requires changing habitual beliefs and behavior. Reconnecting also requires learning how to be in healthy relationships with other people, with the earth, with one's culture and core values and with the Creator.
 - b. Rediscovery** - The rediscovery of healthy patterns of living, known to the community in its past can provide valuable models and solutions for solving the problems of today.
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- c. Re-patterning** - Not only individuals, but also families and community organizations and institutions need to learn new values and patterns of operation that move beyond the "war-zone" mentality so common to dysfunctional community life. This kind of learning requires a mutual effort to heal wounds, to negotiate new relationships and to identify and to learn new, more constructive ways of working together for the benefit of everyone.
- d. Capacity building** - Capacity-building really means learning to do what is required for success in any endeavor. This can involve changing ways of thinking, habits of perception and emotional responses, and ways of interpreting others' behavioral patterns. Other types of capacity which need to be developed are related to skills, knowledge, character and moral integrity, attitudes, values, aspirations and vision. All of these can impact success in building a healthy pattern of life. Community wellness is many things braided together (personal, social, economic, political, etc.) and that success or failure in one area can affect many others. The challenge in capacity-building for community healing and development is to focus on the right capacities at the right time with the right people.

Much of this learning needs to be skillfully guided through structured experiences that are rooted in real life. The Canadian formal education system, is for the most part, unable to address few of these categories of learning from early childhood through higher education. New educational approaches are needed that are animated by life-sustaining values, that are rooted in traditional wisdom, that address the whole person (mental, emotional, physical and spiritual), that employ processes of learning as a natural part of the healing and development work, and that are oriented to making practical improvements in the quality of everyday life.

5. Building New Patterns of Life

A very critical aspect of the community healing process is to move beyond healing from the past to the life-long task of building and maintaining a healthy present and a sustainable future. Essentially, this means systematically addressing the previously discussed fourteen determinants of health both as distinct lines of action and as an integrated system.

Building new patterns of life can mean many things, including establishing a safe and reliable water supply; training young people to be effective parents; creating viable economic opportunities, access to credit and jobs for young people; opening up the political life so that everyone has a real voice in shaping community governance and social and economic development; utilizing cultural resources such as elders, ceremonies and traditional knowledge to deal with young offenders; creating healthy recreational opportunities for children, youth and families--all of these are examples of building new community patterns of healthy living.

Often this step involves creating or building infrastructure, programs and opportunities that were not there before, or that were there but needed to be changed because the old pattern was unhealthy. Building a new pattern of life means moving beyond what is wrong, to a commitment to building what is right.

Community Healing Programs

Steps toward community healing will never occur in isolation. A holistic approach is the Aboriginal way to community health. The following are potential initiatives that should be considered in any programs used for First Nations self-sufficiency:

- The creation of healing centers that focus on individual healing as well as a restructuring of the community.
- The facilitation of core groups of community members who focus on specific issues that aid in the community healing process.
- The creation of community sexual abuse intervention teams, focusing on individual healing, reflecting the Aboriginal world view, rather than the current focus on retribution.
- The creation of community-based learning environments where tailor-made programs can be implemented to meet the needs of the community; such an intervention will require a formal learning strategy created and implemented by First Nations.
- The creation of an international economic network whereby indigenous entrepreneurs may increase and thereby strengthen the communities economically.
- The creation of an Aboriginal Charter of human rights and responsibilities.
- The creation of an Aboriginal healing accord.
- The creation of an Aboriginal healing fund and human development societies

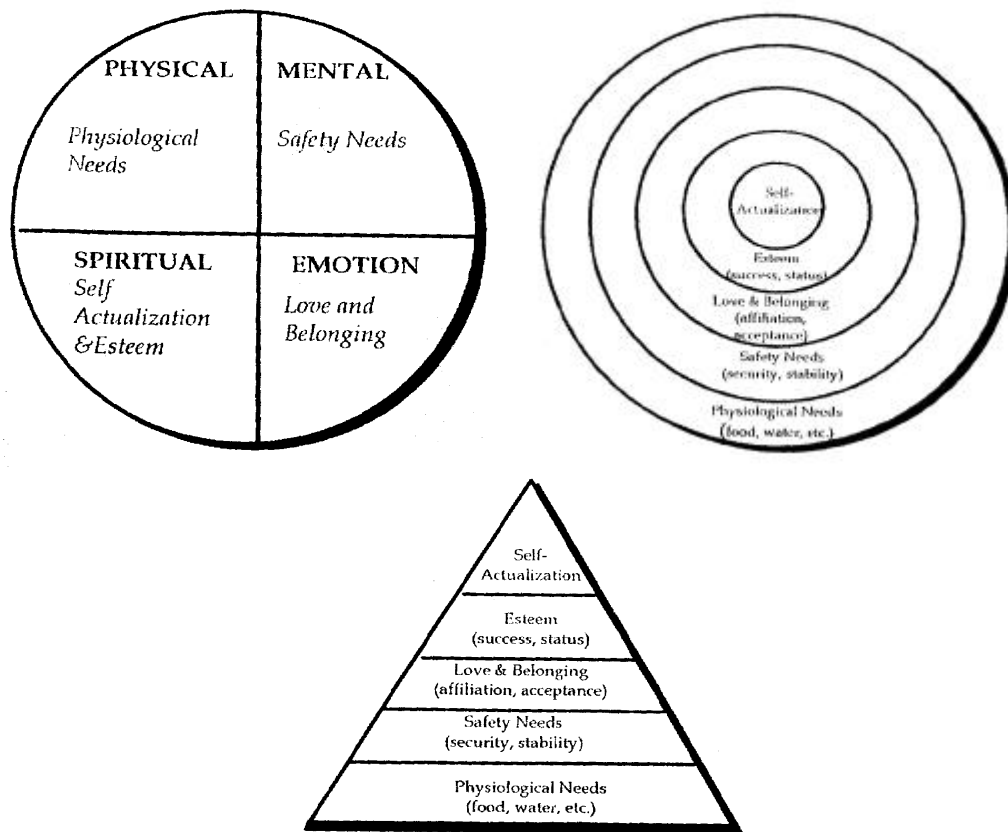
Conclusion

A sustainable economic base and healthy human relationships - these were the tenants underlying self-sufficiency for First Nations. Within these tenants a transitional framework for social security reform can be found that steps outside current patterns of the Canadian social security system. Our elders tell us what must be included in such a system. It is a combination of development from within the community combined with a clear vision of families, community and learning that meets the highest capacity of well being and prosperity.

Within the framework of self sufficiency individual First Nations will be required to engage in personal, family and community healing. Canadian social security reform must be intertwined with such issues as: prosperity, leadership and mentoring, learning new relationships and building new patterns of life - all adding a native outlook to the ongoing development of the concept of aboriginal self sufficiency. The historical boundaries between Canadian and First Nations culture has proved that self-sufficiency for one nation does not necessarily work for another. A new framework is needed where social security reform includes First Nation culture as part of a relevant and productive vision for the future. The cultural nuances of Aboriginal self sufficiency must be included in any attempts at social security reform.

Reform requires a new way of life for First Nations that supports a legitimate social security safety net. This system must integrate the right of First Nations to self-sufficiency. This chapter has outlined guidelines for such reform. Leadership is required to move towards making reform more than a collection of guidelines. It requires the Canadian Government and First Nations to create a timetable for restoring self-sufficiency to our people all across Canada.

Figure 4.2 Role of the Medicine Wheel



Chapter 5 Creating Partnerships through Social Security Reform

Introduction

Our research indicates that economic and social dependency, loss of jurisdictional power and a lack of capacity building have created a myriad of problems among First Nation communities. Traditionally, activities such as trading, bartering and constant informal networking played a key role in our communities and helped First Nations cope with the above stated problems. These activities were seen as *partnerships* – these partnerships were comprised of sharing within a healthy economy and promoted a general sense of well being among our people. This was especially true for those who were in economic, emotional or spiritual need. For example, children, Elders and other clearly defined groups were never viewed or cared for in isolation. Partnerships were traditionally recognized between these groups and others in the community such as: Chiefs, Clan members or Spiritual Leaders. Issues surrounding the success and well being of our people were dependent upon partnerships which gave us guidance and direction. The present Social Security System in Canada has not taken this cultural tradition of partnerships into account when providing services within the Social Security Safety Net. Issues dealing with social dependency, jurisdiction and capacity building and other important themes for Social Security Reform require a recognition of these *partnerships* and must be included in any reform affecting the Social Security Safety Net for First Nation people across Canada.

The current system of Social Security has created a sense of isolation among First Nations by focusing on the procedures of funding while excluding the traditional process found in Native partnerships. First Nations people receive support primarily through an allocation of money creating a false sense of social security among our communities. The cultural tradition of community partnerships is either lost or given less importance in the overall funding process. Research shows these procedures have made a dramatic impact on First Nations culture and tradition. The instance of a First Nations person receiving a monthly cheque from the Canadian government creates images of isolation and dependency. The focus for this individual is not on partnerships with others in the community but the dependence on an outside government source for a personal sense of well being. The isolated dependence on someone from outside the First Nations community for a sense of personal well being goes directly against Aboriginal traditions and culture. The re-establishment of *partnerships* in Social Security Reform for First Nations communities balances economic, emotional and spiritual care giving and maintains a tradition of sharing that is woven tightly into the fabric of First Nations culture.

Restoring Partnerships in Social Security Reform

Partnerships in the context of Social Security Reform for First Nations blend economic resources with traditional forms of networking and sharing. The combination of economic, emotional, and spiritual endeavors creates a broader base for reform to be effective. Portions of this new reform will remain economic and will continue the work of established funding sources. Other portions will re-establish traditional and cultural links between First Nations communities and their people. The following are areas that will require the re-establishment of partnerships for a sense of balance to be restored in First Nation Communities.

Language Partnerships

One of the most crucial issues facing Aboriginal people are language revitalization and preservation programming. In those communities where an Aboriginal language is still strong, one finds a sense of pride and cohesion with the culture. Language is at the heart of our First Nation identity and remains the connecting force in Aboriginal partnerships. Those communities who are losing their language, sacrifice linkages from the past to seven generations into the future. Loss of this linkage is a tragedy that most Aboriginal people are unwilling to accept. First Nation speakers whether they are fluent speakers or have little or no knowledge of an Aboriginal language, fully concur on the crucial role traditional language plays in their culture. Partnerships between First Nation leaders and their communities will survive through funding opportunities that encourage preservation of the language. In light of these beliefs, the following action is recommended:

- **Relevant and meaningful Aboriginal language initiatives** must be activated and they must be designed, developed, delivered and implemented through community partnerships developed by First Nation people. These partnerships must be activated on a national basis in order to restore and maintain First Nations languages and culture.
 - The Canadian government must place Aboriginal language revitalization as a top priority by providing **adequate and continuous financial resources** to First Nations language initiatives. This funding should be directed toward Aboriginal language immersion programs where partnerships can be developed between both young and old alike.
 - Each First Nation must be provided with financial support to **assess their local linguistic needs** and this must be accomplished through partnerships between government and
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community leaders where funding considers the tradition of community sharing.

- Educational systems of First Nations students must take a major role in language retention initiatives by **implementing bilingual programs** where language appreciation between Aboriginal languages and English and French are equally shared. Such a partnership will allow both First Nations and Canadian culture appropriate common ground for successful Social Security Reform.

The following list is presented as specific beliefs and activities to augment those areas covered above:

- Create and implement Aboriginal language initiatives on a national basis.
- Aboriginal people must implement aboriginal language initiatives.
- Language is a fundamental human right. Partnerships must be sought at the international level if the issue continues to not be addressed by the federal government.
- Funding must be provided by the Government of Canada to support and maintain language activities, including immersion programs for both young and old.
- Culturally appropriate and strategic language programs must be set up that focus on language and culture.
- Coordinating centers for language initiatives must be set up and financially supported to ensure language revival in First Nations communities.
- Training processes and evaluation processes must be set up.
- Programs must be set up to ensure fluency through immersion and bilingual training.
- Linguistic and academic needs of children must be met in their first language.

Partnerships to Combat Child Poverty

Child poverty has long been recognized as a national native problem. The Canadian government and First Nations leaders have already begun a partnership that can act as a model to other community based projects for First Nations. This model is found in the Brighter Futures Initiative, a government funded project that became a community owned and driven series of programs to help combat child poverty. The Brighter Futures Initiative has expanded awareness of health and social problems and has developed and implemented ways of addressing serious community issues. By creating a partnership with First Nations communities, the Canadian government shares responsibility for the child poverty problems while reaffirming traditional First Nations values. In essence, working together as a community became the foundation for this phase of repairing the Social Security Safety Net. The following are other child poverty issues that should be addressed for Social Security Reform:

- There needs to be a thorough study done on the new **National Child Tax Benefit (NCTB) System**. This must include two criteria; income supplement based on number of children and tax breaks based on income. The target for the NCTB is the working poor. By increasing the income supplement, the federal government is freeing up funds that the provinces presently spend on families and children. These funds will be invested in services for the working poor across Canada. Unfortunately, not all provinces have included First Nations in this plan and have said that First Nations are a federal responsibility. Here is a perfect example of the lack of cooperation and partnership between provincial, federal and First Nations governments. A partnership is needed here at the highest level.
- Another partnership with potential is the implementation of a **National First Nations Child Benefits System**. Again this initiative faces a partnership problem based on conflicts between First Nations and the Federal Government of Canada. The biggest challenge focuses around the Canadian government's lack of acceptance toward First Nations inherent view of its place in Canada. A successful partnership would view First Nations as a separate entity yet part of the whole Canadian government system. Such a view would allow for government funding combined with each community's view concerning their specific needs and paths to healing the children of the community. Only a strong partnership with the Canadian government can make such an initiative successful.

The following statistics give credence to an urgent need for partnerships in the fight against First Nations poverty:

- Life Expectancy is below the Canadian average. Registered Indians on the reserve for a male is 62 years and for females is 69.9 years (RCAP).
 - Suicide rates of Registered Indian youth (15-24 are 6 times higher than the national norm.
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- Birth and fertility rates of Registered Indians are twice the Canadian average.
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is believed to be higher than the national norm. 28-72 per 1,000 live births compared to a norm of 1.9 live births.
- Aboriginal people are more likely to have disabilities with hearing, sight and speech than other Canadians.
- Addictions and solvent abuse is at 62% for addiction when perceived as a problem and solvent abuse is predicted at 22%
- AIDS/HIV is increasing among Aboriginals while it is decreasing in the mainstream population.
- 40% of aboriginal adult reported that family violence is a problem in their community, 25% see sexual abuse and 15% view rape as problems.

Environmental Partnerships

The traditional First Nations social safety net encompassed communities and the land where these communities survived. Nations occupied specific territories and were specifically linked to the land and its resources. In other words, First Nations communities created a close partnership with the land. Although there were differences in land and resource-based activity there were common social and political principles to all Aboriginal nations which included stewardship of the earth and a set of responsibilities and obligations governing individuals, families or clans. This responsibility established the rules of governing access and the management of natural resources. Aboriginal people managed the ecosystem through decision-making that involved the sharing of specialized knowledge and the balancing of all interest and concerns through the use of partnerships. The following are but a few examples of current practices where partnerships with the environment have been successful:

- Sustainable practices and techniques to promote growth in areas that have been logged are used at the Winneway Forestry Authority's (WFA) operation. Logged areas will not be touched again for a period of 15 years. The nature of a horse-logging operation eliminates the use of modern machinery and its devastating effects on fish, wildlife and the entire ecosystem. A significant aspect that is more apparent from the research at Winneway is the **use of traditional ecological knowledge**. Traditional ecological knowledge at the Long Point First Nation was utilized by getting Elders to provide information to assist in creating a Land Use and Occupancy Map of their territory. Here we see a partnership between business, a First Nation community and the land. An environmental partnership that works.
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- At Wabuno Fish Processors, the waste is sold as food supply to a mink farm in southern Ontario. Here is another example where a First Nations community was involved in the creation of a business, was asked for their opinions, consulted during the early development stages and continues to be consulted for major decisions. Values like community pride, self-esteem, and an enhanced quality of life were attributed to the jobs that were available as a result of the business project. **Partnerships that include First Nations environmental views** and sound business practices are a partnership that benefits everyone involved.

Other environmental options for partnerships are in the area of **resource development**. First Nations leaders need to take the existing Canadian format and change the following elements:

- Make First Nations responsible for **community-based administration** of programs, using DIAND funding.
- **Allow lump-sum payments** to the communities rather than funding on a project-by-project basis. In other words, funding should be seen as wages or as supplemental income, rather than social assistance funding.
- **A commission should be established** consisting of First Nations individuals who report directly to the Minister of Indian Affairs or Parliament and be responsible for funding for on-reserve social assistance. This commission would also look after other areas of social concern such as health, education and housing
- Another partnership proposal is to develop a **Government to Government system** whereby a bilateral partnership between the Government of Canada and First Nations is created. First Nations would then be responsible for the development of their own programs and policies based specifically on First Nations control and need. This alternative requires a stable-funding base negotiated between the federal government and First Nations.

Partnerships in Social Assistance

The social assistance program currently in place in most First Nation communities follows a federal framework that is more than thirty years old and obliges communities to adhere to provincial or territorial models, regulations, policies and benefit levels that do not consider First Nations as acting copartners. This program consumes a tremendous amount of funding and has become the staple of many Aboriginal communities (RCAP, 1996). It is estimated that both the number of First Nations people receiving social assistance and the cost of the program may double by the year 2000 and triple by 2003.

The social assistance program has many weaknesses that relate directly to the lack of community partnerships that would combine social assistance with First Nations culture

and tradition. One example is in the assumption that recipients will soon return to the paid labour force. This assumption does not take into consideration the loss experienced in the areas of community sharing, personal empowerment and community based partnerships. First Nations governments know current social assistance programs can be dramatically improved for their people and communities when partnerships are formed along the lines of cultural values. Social Security Reform requires partnerships that allow communities the opportunity to develop an alternative system based on Aboriginal traditions, values and needs. The following are criteria for modifying these programs:

- In the past, efforts to reform the social assistance program failed because they addressed the wrong set of problems. They assumed the problem was the social assistance program when social assistance dependency is connected to a far larger problem. Caseloads and expenditures are high because there are **few alternatives for growth** in First Nations communities. Without a sense of community partnerships, First Nations people have a difficult time looking to their people for shared help. Fundamental reform comes from within the community and only First Nations people fully understand their values and traditions. Community partnerships will help others understand these fundamental teachings of the culture and provide a vehicle for growth.
 - A new social assistance system for First Nations communities must consider several different components. First, the government of Canada has to acknowledge the right of First Nations to self-government and the right of First Nations government to work in partnership in determining the nature and level of services to Aboriginal people. Second, First Nations governments must be **free from the obligation** to follow those models, regulations and policies that characterize the provincial and territorial programs. Third, there must be **block funding** and **adequate funding** so communities can remain flexible in the use of existing social resources according to their own social and economic agenda. Fourth, there has to be an **interim funding formula** that includes clear guarantees for increases in spending that results from changing demographics or economic conditions. Finally, communities must be able to **retain any savings** that results from program changes.
 - Within the social assistance system there are numerous recommendations for partnerships in the area of **income support**. For example, there needs to be equal participation from Aboriginal communities across Canada and not merely a select few. Furthermore Aboriginal women need more involvement with income support reform and resources and capital should be distributed equally, based on need, rather than on a per capita population. For all of these to be effective a First Nations Health, Assistance and Support Act should be
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implemented on a national level. This act should be legislated by First Nations and equally recognized by the Canadian government. Such an act will be effective when education and awareness initiatives developed in all First Nations communities have a dramatic effect on the social assistance formula for Aboriginal people.

Holistic Planning - The Formula for Community Partnerships

Presently, Social Security programs for First Nations people are delivered through First Nations and federal and provincial agencies. This creates the dilemma in that every problem found in First Nations communities, has been designated by the Canadian government into a different program. First Nations partnerships require a total life experience from individuals, families and communities that blends all three together through culture and tradition. Presently there are programs for addictions, family violence, social assistance, child welfare, recreation, housing and Elders yet all of these programs remain quite separate from each other.

A holistic approach to planning offers many benefits for First Nations communities because it integrates different aspects of life's experiences and it is based on traditional First Nations culture. Many of these beliefs can be found in the use of the "Holistic Planning Wheel." The following describes some of its tenants and shows it's integration into reasons for community partnerships:

- Holistic Planning gains effectiveness with a **strong commitment** from Chief and Council and participation by a broad range of community members. With this broad partnership, clear decision-making and accountability can be recognized in committed leadership from all involved. This combined with adequate resources creates a holistic plan for all the social agencies and with proper resources can be seen as a holistic community plan for the betterment of the community at large.
- The most critical criteria for holistic planning is; **working within the community, involving the community at every step, using the strengths that are found in every community and building skills and experience through community growth.** Community involvement creates feelings of control and responsibility. It solidifies the community's commitment to partnerships among different social agencies. It assures that new programs reflect specific community needs.

Partnerships in Health

During the past decade there has been an escalation in the struggle of Canada's First Nations for greater control over their health care needs. The fact that Aboriginal people shoulder a disproportionate amount of ill health in Canadian society makes the need for new partnerships in health care a vital necessity. First Nations communities have responded to this need by identifying health care as a critical concern for future development and survival. The following are four recommendations for new partnerships in the area of health care for First Nation communities:

- **Greater cooperation** must be established between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health care providers. Such a partnership will ensure health care education and practice is promoted in First Nations communities. Forums should be held where health care practices from both mainstream Canadian society and Aboriginal societies are presented to Aboriginal people across Canada.
- Non-Aboriginal practitioners of health care in the community need to be **culturally educated** by elders and traditional healers. The meshing of both cultures makes health care more relevant and understandable to First Nations people. Common ground can be established through education where both professional groups partnership with common practices and learn new perspectives from the other group.
- The First Nations **communities must go slowly** through the process of gaining increased control over health care services to properly address local customs and specific issues that may arise. Partnerships are accumulative enterprises and patience will benefit all concerned in new partnerships in health.
- Incentives must be given to encourage Aboriginal people to enter into the health care professions. Education and employment policies must be improved. Cultivation of Native healers can be encouraged through incentives such as **cultural scholarships** and other programs for health care awareness.

Conclusion

The Aboriginal Strategic Initiative has been conducting a comprehensive review of social security programming and reform for First Nations. The purpose of the initiative is the development of a First Nations Social Security Safety Net. To support this, it has focused research expertise and resources on examining creative, practical and positive initiatives that improve partnerships among First Nations people. The research is directed toward developing a framework for **cooperative action** to accomplish the long-term vision of an appropriate, comprehensive First Nations Social Security System.

This chapter synthesized research on Social Security Reform dealing with community partnerships. It is a review and analysis of how the directed research addresses the concept of community partnerships and their impact on personal and community growth. The concept of partnership incorporated such issues as child poverty, holistic planning, social assistance, revitalization of language, health care and other contemporary themes.

The research is clear. The state of traditional First Nations Social Security has been steadily deteriorating into human dependency by forces outside First Nations communities. Many people live in poverty and there are high rates of reliance on social assistance and income support programs. Traditional economies are alienated from the lands that sustained them while communities struggle to build new economies without adequate resources. These all lead to strong signs of poor physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. The need for social security reform strongly weighs on First Nations communities to find adequate answers for its people. The struggle is to learn old partnerships and apply them to new social problems.

As a core value, partnerships are one of the touchstones for examining Social Security Reform. However partnerships alone are not the only steps on the path to self-sufficiency, self-determination and social well being. There remain other obstacles in the way and other steps must be taken. Regaining social security will mean learning new skills, creating strong economies, taking stock of our resources, resolving issues of jurisdiction, and healing. All of these steps will need to be taken together in a way that supports holistic well being of individuals, families and communities. The research addresses many steps along the way to successful Aboriginal partnerships. The challenge will be the examination of these steps from the perspective of Social Security Reform. The end result will be the regaining of partnerships that will bring forth a new outlook on providing care through a First Nations Social Security Safety Net.

Chapter 6 Summary of the Research

Introduction

The research undertaken by this project vividly documents that existing social programs have done little to help First Nation citizens break free from the chains of dependency that has now spanned generations. This is due to dramatically diverging cultural perspectives on the part of the federal government pertaining to solutions to the many problems facing First Nations. The result is conditions of chronic poverty, poor health, substance abuse, family violence, mental illness and crime that continue to be rampant in First Nations communities today.

Social Security reform must ultimately be controlled by First Nations with the jurisdiction, power and resources that go along with it. This will require First Nation sanctioned policy that allows First Nation leadership periodic assessment of progress. Without sanctions, reform will not be accountable to First Nation communities. The emotional and cultural side of reform will be lost to others outside our communities *who have little investment in change and growth*. Accomplishment of the vision described herein can only be determined if social security reform is developed *with the community needs as a first priority*. The design will *require an understanding of native culture and practices that can be integrated into public policy*. This will require Social Security Reform *to be First Nations specific*. It must be culturally and socially relevant to First Nation philosophy and beliefs. In practice this will require Social Security Reform to be *managed and delivered within First Nation communities*

Having stated the need for control over a national framework for Social Security Reform, let us present those elements needed for a comprehensive and relevant Social Safety Net for First Nation people. Its effectiveness will be determined by:

- **Creating minimum requirements for a First Nations Social Safety Net.**
 - **Having a vision of what the Social Safety Net will stand for.**
 - **Demonstrating the principal framework of the Social Safety Net.**
 - **Knowing the service providers within the Social Safety Net and the linkages between them.**
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Minimum Requirements for a First Nations Social Security Net

New ideas are based on peoples' beliefs and what is required for the practice of these beliefs. First Nations in their pursuit of Social Security Reform have stated the minimum requirements needed for putting their beliefs into practice in the construction of a Social Security Safety Net. These are the minimum requirements seen through the eyes of the First Nations leaders and communities. They represent dramatic changes in Social Security Reform for the immediate future:

- The Social Security Safety Net must be *client driven* with the capacity to grow and change with the needs of each First Nation community. The Canadian Government has a long history of decisions being made by a selected group of individuals and professionals who have mandated reforms to First Nations and in doing so, have ignored the historical practices of these individual native communities. The cultural practice of listening closely to peoples' needs and deriving decisions based on the peoples' will, is a minimal requirement for developing a Social Security Safety Net. People driven decisions stands as a cultural phenomenon, a traditional practice that must be required in Social Security Reform. It is the Aboriginal way to growth and change.
 - The Social Security Safety Net must *promote responsibility for children and youth*. The culture of First Nations people requires this. Social planning in a First Nation community evolves around children and youth. The decisions made about the social well being of First Nations people require looking seven generations into the future. The future being perceived as so is primarily for the children and youth of each community. Any Social Security Safety Net that does not consider children and youth will be inconsistent with fundamental traditional First Nation teachings.
 - The development of a Social Security Safety Net must be *culturally based*. Consider the previous minimal requirement concerning plans for promoting responsibility for children and youth. It becomes clear how First Nations have modeled their culture and rituals around making decisions for the next seven generations. In the beliefs of First Nations social planners it still remains a part of the requirements for social decision making. Also, added to decisions for seven generations is the belief in the power of the Medicine Wheel. Balance must be made between the four directions and First Nations must take this balance seriously when forming policy regarding a Social Security Safety Net. Previous Social Security Reform has not considered this balance causing cultural conflicts in many native communities.
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- Another addition that must be included in a Social Security Safety Net proposal is the inherent right of First Nation to ***representation of the Aboriginal languages*** in any agreements signed or programs developed. The implementation of professional jargon at the expense of the cultural language of First Nations depreciates the value of any given program or policy. This is especially true among the elderly who rely on their language for confidence, pride and understanding the world around them. A blend of professional and cultural language becomes a minimal requirement for social change.
- The ***promotion of partnerships*** at all levels is of vital importance for a Social Security Safety Net and it must be inclusive of all stakeholders. This has not always been the case. Previous efforts have not been inclusive causing the spirit of reform to diminish. In the future it will be mandatory that such efforts as the Agenda for Action be linked to First Nations reform. The Government of Canada must be accountable for commitments concerning renewed partnerships, recognition and strengthening of First Nations governments, equitable and sustainable fiscal relationships and supporting stronger First Nations communities. All of these must be seen as efforts toward the promotion of partnerships with all involved in bringing Social Security to the First Nations people across Canada.

Having a vision of what a Social Security Safety Net will stand for

A new vision for a First Nations Social Security Safety Net might be best described in the following categories in this section. All of these categories were derived from the needs and visions of the First Nations who contributed to this new picture of reform. It encompasses both cultural and professional criteria needed for any successful Social Safety Net for First Nations people:

A First Nations Social Security Safety Net must ensure the **realignment of current inter-jurisdictional arrangements** in order to support autonomous First Nations jurisdiction over programs within the context of the “net.” With this in mind the “net” must encompass *community level charters* that will set out the rights and responsibilities for community, regional or national accords. By creating this broad “net” First Nations will insure control over those laws, programs and standards that ultimately have a profound impact on all Aboriginal people across Canada. Without realigning current-jurisdictional arrangements, charters are mandated from the Canadian government and

are not seen as an autonomous part of First Nations Culture. Therefore First Nations are constantly looking to the government for direction. The realignment of jurisdiction issues toward autonomy will restore clarity to First Nation's goals and objectives.

A First Nations Social Security Safety Net must facilitate and sustain social development that respects First Nations definitions of **self-determined health, well being and security**. Social development without an understanding of First Nations culture will miss the great importance of self-determined health from a Native point of view. Social development without an understanding of a First Nations definition of "well-being" combined with a misunderstanding of self-determined health will only add to the problem for both are intertwined like cords on a rope. The lack of understanding for these two Aboriginal perspectives may actually cause deepened social unrest. Furthermore, social development that does not capture a First Nations idea of security will spend money on programs to create security only to miss the cultural understanding of "security" for First Nations people. Respect for First Nations definitions of self-determined health, well being and security will ensure the most productive way to facilitate and sustain these social programs.

- A First Nations Social Security Safety Net must **facilitate the empowerment and building of capacity** among First Nations in order to foster community development and end welfare dependency. One of the keys to First Nations' successful transformation of the Social Security Safety Net will be when our people have the education, skills and chance for real life experiences that come from being educated and having the confidence to use that education in all areas of the Aboriginal community. Reform within the realm of capacity building must include a First Nations perspective if more Aboriginal young people are going to enter the professional workforce. A sense of inferiority, misunderstanding and a lack of opportunity have created the illusion that only mainstream Canadians have the capacity to teach a class, administer a program or show direction in developing creative new legislation. Our people need a sense of personal power to redirect this negative thinking. Personal empowerment will motivate our people to move from welfare dependency to self reliant integrity.
 - A First Nations Social Security Safety Net must promote and secure a way of life that produces "**whole health**" in First Nations communities in terms of well being and prosperity. The tradition of the Medicine Wheel gives direction to Social Security Reform when considering whole health issues. Traditional First Nations encourage their people to practice a sense of balance when pursuing a healthy life style. The Medicine Wheel blends physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual principles for a "whole health" approach to prosperity and a meaningful life. A Social Security Net that does not understand the importance of this balance will be out of balance
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causing government intervention to be socially irrelevant to First Nations people.

- A First Nations Social Security Net must ensure a **sustainable economic base** i.e., the means to provide food, clothing, shelter, medicine and other material goods. This must be complimented by healthy human relationships based on respect, caring and mutual trust. Through treaties, promises and governmental mandates, First Nations experienced fluctuating efforts by the Canadian government to financially help our people. These efforts have been erratic and short term. A sustainable economic base will come when agreements are made between First Nations and the Canadian government that allows Aboriginal people the opportunity to develop their personal economic base while the government of Canada adhere to long term sustainable funding as promised in treaties and agreements. A sustainable economic base must come from the top down by the Canadian government and the bottom up by the First Nations. A meeting of these two economic efforts will ensure a sustainable economic base.
 - A First Nations Social Security Net must be **all encompassing** so First Nations may build on: existing capacity; First Nations institutions; programs; expertise and partnerships to ensure social and cultural development; community healing; health and wellness; child and family services; education; training; languages and literacy; housing; economic and business development. The present Social Security System has sporadically made attempts at all of the above issues. It has favored one issue over others or has developed certain issues for a certain period of time then has headed in an entirely different direction on these issues. An all-encompassing attempt at Social Security Reform will connect these extremely important issues and create a consistent, coherent vision that First Nations can understand. Without this, old resentments from previously tried, sporadic attempts will undermine a successful Social Security Safety Net.
 - A First Nations Social Security Safety Net must **recognize the role of women, elders and the disabled** and ensure flexibility in programming so the lifestyles unique to First Nation communities are acknowledged and respected. In these areas we find the *vital emphasis* on First Nations culture and tradition. Elders are given a special place in First Nations culture, and programs should be flexible enough for our Elders to remain within their honored places in society. The woman's role in First Nations communities has traditionally been one of flexibility and power (particularly in cultures that are matrilineal), Social Security Reform should reflect
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this. The disabled members of our communities need to be recognized for their valuable input and unique perspectives. We also need to share these inputs and perspectives with the young people of our communities. Recognition of these three groups will ensure First Nations culture is not undermined by a given Social Security Safety Net.

- A First Nations Social Security Net must ensure **consultations with various stakeholders** which consist of Elders, leaders, First Nations organizations, children, youth and parents. Traditionally the community, not an individual, has set direction for these issues within most First Nations communities. It is paramount that each community be included in any legitimate reform of the Social Security Safety Net. Individualism vs. a community-oriented philosophy remains a fundamental difference between First Nations and European cultures. Without a recognition of the First Nations beliefs in community decision making, the Canadian government will isolate the helpers from those being helped. This is an unacceptable premise in First Nation thinking and will be problematic no matter how much funding is used to promote Social Security program.
- A First Nations Social Security Net must address the **policy challenges of unemployment, underemployment and poverty** in First Nation communities as the highest priority. It goes without saying that the specter of poverty has clouded many valid attempts at Social Security Reform. All other reform issues rest on First Nations having a will for surviving the terrible conditions found in some quarters of our vast territory. A fair and meaningful engagement of the unemployment and poverty problems facing First Nations would go a long way to assuring the success of other programs in the Social Security Net. First Nations need to put into action Social Security Reforms and need to feel satisfied with them both economically and spiritually. The battle over poverty is at the spiritual heart of any attempts at Social Security Reform.

Demonstrating the principal framework of the Social Security Net

The Social Security Safety Net requires a framework giving structure to a First Nations vision of reform. Visions are based on concrete, pragmatic structures and the following themes capture those certain elements necessary for any framework to be effective. It is essential that the following items be considered for successful Social Security Reform:

- Certain accountability mechanisms must be built into the Social Security Net to ensure reliable and valid assessment of all social programs. Without accountability, community and economic development will suffer, regardless of the commitments from First Nations and Canadian government leaders. Specifically, there must be an **open policy on assessment** that includes the community. This policy must include ongoing evaluations. Furthermore, the culture of First Nations demands a certain transparency when evaluating for accountability and it must allow **community input** into all developed accountability mechanisms.
 - Mechanisms to **ensure community capacity building** must be an integral part of a National Framework. Educational programs leading to practical training for First Nations people cannot be overlooked by Canadian government officials. The vicious cycle of poverty and oppression has continued because Aboriginal people have been the recipients of a National Framework for Social Security Reform yet have had little influence on its basic structure. The future National Framework must correct this through the creation of policies that promote capacity building in the areas of education, entrepreneurship and economic development.
 - A long history of using outsiders to manage and control First Nation programs and procedures has left a yearning for **self-management and self-control** in the minds of First Nations people. It is one experience to watch outsiders dictate policies and procedures to First Nations communities across Canada but it is quite another for these communities to manage themselves. There remains a subtle sense of psychological isolation as long as community outsiders make the decisions, pay the bills and enforce the policies. Self-management along with a strong emphasis on capacity building will empower communities to develop pride through in-house community leaders. With this in mind, there should be a strong effort to hire qualified indigenous people for government contracts and service agreements.
 - The development of a First Nations Social Security Net will require an organized structure of team members to oversee this initiative. A **well-defined hierarchy** of these members will combine a *top down* and a *bottom up* management regime where both Canadian and First Nations governments clearly understand their place on the organizational structure. Clear lines of communication must augment this regime with the establishment of specific communication protocols between team members from both governments. A clear line of communication combined with a well-defined organizational structure assures accountability to the entire Social Security Reform movement.
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- First Nations communities must generate the initial ideas and purposes for any Social Security Reform initiative. The opinions and judgments for this National Framework must be **community driven** and must have community consensus and consent. First Nations want a framework for Social Security Reform that considers community input as part of its foundation. For centuries community support has remained the backbone of the social structure found in First Nation communities. Not to recognize this would create a shortsighted perspective on establishing a new Social Security Safety Net.
 - The inclusion of a new formula for **access to government funding** will increase the success of the initiative. Previous Canadian government funding formulas have made unchecked assumptions about the proper framework for funding Reform programs. The assumption, "*First Nations needs are based on Canadian government resources.*" should be replaced with the assumption, "*Canadian resources are based on First Nations needs.*" Tremendous frustration is associated with reliance on a Canadian Government program that is dramatically cut over time. In many instances the funding cut only *increases* the need leaving First Nations people disillusioned with the Canadian government.
 - **Representation of Elders** must be considered when making Social Security Reform decisions. Government documents that do not include the opinions of elders and chiefs from First Nations communities weaken the principal structure of any reform effort. The inclusion of Elders legitimizes the reform process. It assures everyone that decisions affecting the lives of indigenous people were not made in isolation. The knowledge of officials from the Canadian government will be enhanced by the wisdom of our Elders who represent our communities and are repositories of our culture. The combination of Canadian officials and community Elders creates balance and parity in the reform process.
 - At the everyday level of practice the creation of a Social Security Framework is accomplished only if a **well represented team** from First Nation communities attain Social Security Reform. This includes such diverse groups as chiefs, Elders, women, the disabled, youth and other specific groups needing representation in the reform process. Strength comes from the combination of community members who contribute to reform while keeping government practices culturally honest. The principal structure of the Social Security Safety Net becomes strong through the cultural practice of community inclusion combined with Canadian government support.
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Without a well-represented team from First Nation communities, government success or failure depends solely on Canadian dollars to solve social problems. Consequently, the heart of reform runs the risk of being broken based on isolationist policies.

- Successful Social Security reform will require **technical support** from the Canadian government until First Nation communities have the expertise to support themselves. The government must develop a policy of “training the trainers” as opposed to being the trainers themselves. Government technical support only calls for more government technical support. Training First Nations people to be trainers empowers our communities and allows support to come from within. This *bottom up* approach to creating technical excellence in Social Security Reform will accumulate significant benefits over the long run. Trainers from the communities will become the technical representatives in discussions concerning reform and practice in the Social Security Safety Net.

Knowing the service providers within the Social Security Safety Net and the linkages between them

Our research findings indicate that our people see many linkages between a whole variety of stakeholders or potential partners in developing a First Nations Safety Net. The following are brief descriptions of these stakeholders and their possible interconnections:

- **First Nations, Chief and Council** - The level of Chief and Council can provide a central location for input into the Social Security Safety Net. In a sense they hold the key position to link with all other stakeholders and have the resources to inform them of the ongoing maintenance required for an effective Social Security Safety Net. They are the facilitators of the reform process and have the largest possibility for networking.
 - **Regional Native Organizations and affiliates** - These organizations are the keepers of the cultural flame and the local spirit of reform. They will work closely with all other stakeholders to assure a First Nations perspective is not lost in the reform process. They can be of specific regional benefit to the Chief and Council of First Nations. They hold the knowledge to protect specific First Nations communities in establishing a regional perspective for the Social Security Safety Net.
 - **National Native Organizations and affiliates** - National Native Organizations have the unique opportunity of being the educators of indigenous culture to mainstream Canadian government agencies.
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They have the knowledge and resources to act as consultants both culturally and professionally. They along with the First Nation chief and councils must be included in all serious Social Security Reform.

- **Government (Federal and Provincial)** - The opportunity is present for traditional Canadian government agencies to network with all of the stakeholders in developing a Social Security Safety Net. The potential for partnerships can exceed many critics' expectations if the Canadian government is willing to see reform from a First Nations point of view. This will require making decisions and allocating funds based on shared viewpoints and mediated agreements with the First Nations.
 - **Economic Development** - Strategies and techniques for ending the vicious cycle of poverty is of major concern to Social Security Reform. The proposed Safety Net will demand strong minded professionals in this area to bolster the need for education and empowerment of First Nations people. They should be strong advocates to both the First Nations, chief and council, but also to agencies within the Canadian government.
 - **Health and Social Services** - These areas of the Social Security Safety Net can make dramatic changes in how care is given to First Nations people. Traditional practices must be incorporated into medical and mental health procedures. Social Services agencies must combine Canadian government procedures with culturally based community practices. Both Canadian and First Nations values must be blended into a fair and reasonable set of criteria.
 - **Income Support - Helping** those who face difficulty helping themselves is a long-standing belief of First Nations people. Canadian government resources must meet the community's needs not community's needs meeting Canadian government resources. The First Nations chief and council must lobby this perspective to Canadian funding sources.
 - **Environment** - First Nations has a long history of placing great value and respect for the environment. Along with justice programs found in First Nation territories, jurisdictional claims must be made to protect our environment. Our natural resources are one of the most vulnerable areas in Social Security Reform. Protecting our environment also protects the cultural beliefs of our people.
 - **Education and Training** - This area must be linked to all the stakeholders in the Social Security Safety Net, including the Canadian government. First Nations trainers must contract with the
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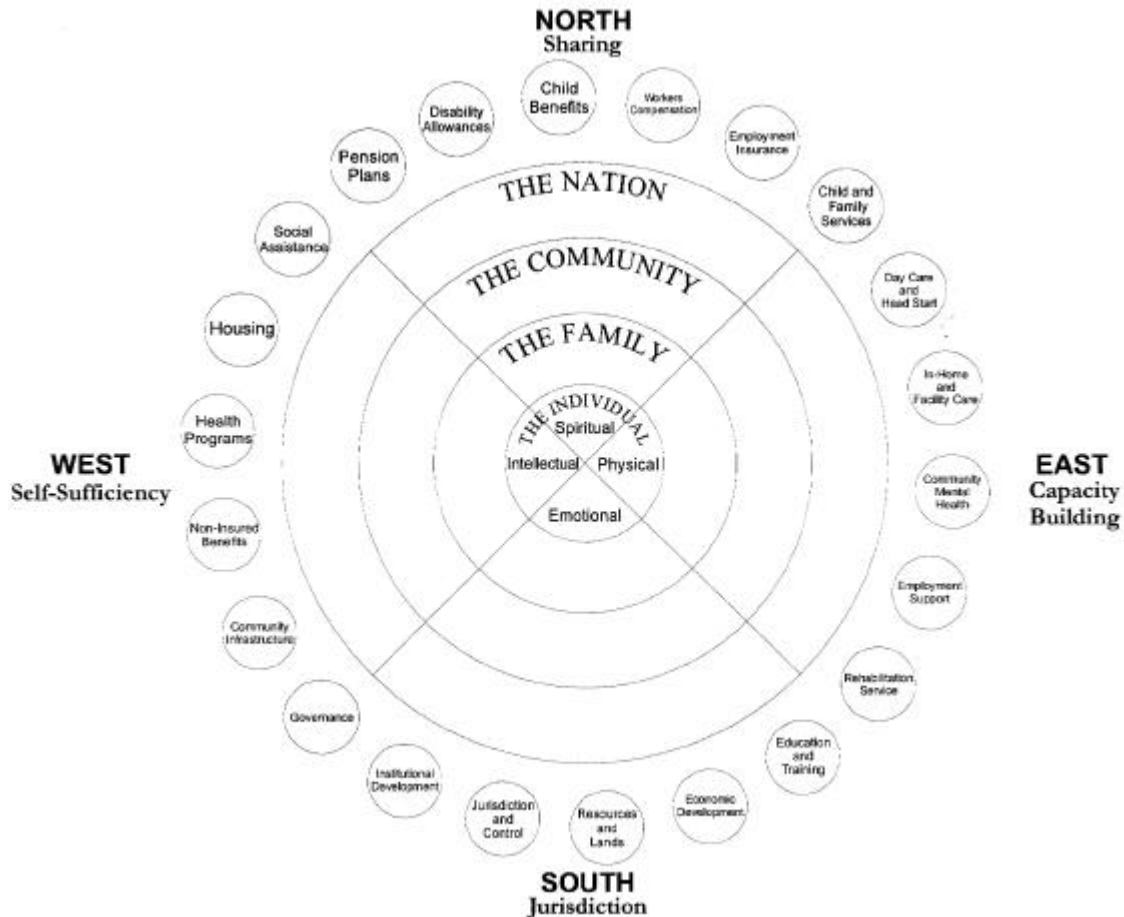
Canadian government to educate them about the culture of our people within the Safety Net. In turn, more funding for capacity building and education, needs to be spent in the areas stakeholders deem relevant. Education must resound as a universal theme among stakeholders in the maintenance of a firm Social Security Safety Net.

- **Language and Literacy** - Funding must be put aside for First Nations schools to educate their youth in the language of their people. This still remains one of the most permanent ways to retain our culture. Strong connections should be made between Language experts, First Nations and the Canadian government to assure funding is available to preserve the many indigenous languages across Canada.
 - **Social Assistance-** The community's response to social needs has helped First Nations protect their most natural resource. Childcare services, home support for the elderly and other related programs, help First Nations fulfill the mandate of protection over seven generations. The Canadian government and First Nations are stakeholders in this assistance. Better networking is needed to assure proper care for such a vulnerable section of our culture.
 - **Labour Market and Training** - First Nations need an effective training approach to the labour market in Canada. The ability to compete in a contemporary competitive market yet still maintain cultural integrity will always be a battle for our people. The characteristic of competition is against our traditional emphasis on cooperation. Other social agencies must communicate their support of First Nations individuals who enter new employment in a competitive Canadian marketplace.
 - **Disability Services** - Individuals with disabilities are treated with respect and compassion according to the traditions of our people. The Canadian government must combine their economic formulas with the same level of compassion if they are to understand a First Nations perspective on disabilities. First Nations people take care of their own. Proper support from funding agencies, without a myriad of government restrictions, will humanize the service given to the disabled in our communities.
 - **Resource Development - Resource** development is dependent upon the belief that all stakeholders may make a unique contribution to any given effort. The theme resource development is a perfect networking issue for stakeholders in a First Nations Social Security Safety Net. All stakeholders have resources that need developing and
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all would benefit from a sophisticated network that shared ideas and solutions to similar problems.

- Finance - Finance** has historically been a one-sided issue favoring the Canadian government. Better financial networking between the Canadian government and First Nation communities will alleviate the financial imbalance caused over years of government favored practices. A structured financial regime where both governments are stakeholders in the process will bring equity to finance in the Social Security Safety Net.
- Justice** - Justice will come through jurisdictional discussions that acknowledge the rights of our people. First Nations, Chief and Councils must network with the government to resolve jurisdictional issues that deter a sense of justice among our people. What define “just treatment” will finally have a forum, if issues of justice are discussed among all of the stakeholders who work within the First Nations Social Security Safety Net.

Figure 6.1 Social Security Reform Medicine Wheel



Chapter 7 Future for First Nations Social Security Reform

In Closing

We have graphically illustrated the problems First Nations have experienced with the current social security safety net. This net has been designed external to our communities and on the basis of assumptions that were imbedded in a foreign culture and experience. As a result our people face limited access to a myriad of services that were never designed to meet their cultural, environmental or linguistic needs. The end result has been inappropriate services are being provided that undermine the very foundation of our communities.

First Nations have a right to self-government as acknowledged by the Government of Canada. This assumes a government-to-government relationship respecting social safety net issues. The federal government must enter into direct funding arrangements with First Nations in which current federal/provincial legal and regulation requirements are replaced with consistent and auditable adherence to First Nation accountability structures.

The federal government has consistently resisted overriding provincial jurisdiction in the field of social and health services at the community level. If First Nations are to define and develop the programs and services that fully reflect and respond to their needs the Government of Canada must finance the social security safety net in a manner that is consistent with First Nations thinking and realities.

Traditionally First Nations were economically and socially self-sufficient as the foundation of their life was linked to a land and resource base. The family provided protection and security for individuals and facilitated participation in the social and political life of the community. The Nation, community, and especially the family, are the heart of traditional First Nations social and economic security systems and their governance. Any system design that does not acknowledge this fact will be doomed to failure.

Jurisdiction is exercised by First Nation governments and expressed through laws, policies, institutions and programs. Social security reform must be designed to implement and achieve the ultimate vision of self determined health, well-being and security. This means that current relationships, responsibilities, resources and program/service arrangements must be restructured. These new arrangements will ultimately have the capacity to respect and support autonomous First Nation jurisdiction in social security. First Nations may then link with Canadian programs and services in areas they deem desirable.

A First Nation Social security system must be designed, developed and implemented by First Nations pursuant to the inherent right of self-government and the exercise of First Nation jurisdiction. First Nation needs can only be met through First Nation relevant policies, programs and services.

The prerequisites for a successful reform process is that it must be rooted in and carried out in accordance with our values, traditions and culture. Viable mechanisms, processes and opportunities for participation and decision making by First Nations people at the community level is essential. Community and governance capacity must be promoted through the development of community leadership and human resource capability.

A First Nation social security system must be holistic and integrated. It must consider local economic and social conditions. Social and development planning must be balanced and integrated with long term economic development strategies. These strategies must be sensitive to local values specifically with respect to lands, resources and the environment.

Next Steps

The Aboriginal Strategic Initiative was designed to focus on identifying practical solutions to overcoming welfare dependency, over the short, medium and long term. The overall objective was to move towards increased flexibility in social assistance funding, so that it may be adapted to meet the differing economic and social development needs of First Nations communities. The following activities are essential to the implementation of the initiatives described herein. They are:

Active dialogue with federal, provincial and First Nations representatives to complete a review of existing programs, services and institutions for the purposes of rationalization, integration and development of a holistic picture of a First Nations social security net; develop broad standards and objectives such as charters or accords to frame goals and objectives; discussion of First Nation jurisdiction and responsibilities for social security, including the distribution of power and allocation of responsibilities between First Nation communities, regional, tribal, nation, provincial or national level councils, organizations and institutions; strategic development of policies, programs and services for all areas; facilitate First Nation and community ownership through the organization of First Nation visioning, consultation and participation activities, communication and education campaigns; and development of strategies to protect First Nations positions on jurisdictional, treaty and fiscal rights.

Continued knowledge development, on community based alternative models to policy, program development and service delivery. The process of reform must be rooted in and complement the traditions and culture of First Nations people. Reform processes must be carried out in accordance with First Nation culture, values and ways. Viable mechanisms, processes and opportunities for participation, consultation, information sharing and decision

making by First Nations people must be established. First Nations people must have the opportunity to participate in envisioning their social security system, establishing strategic directions, planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and reviewing the system.

Direct involvement of First Nations in the sharing of information for the purpose of building capacity among nations and to better understand the social and economic dynamics which prevent them from achieving self-sufficiency and social well-being. First Nations must be able to build upon existing First Nation institutions, programs, expertise and partnerships. These exist in the area of social and cultural development, community healing, health and wellness, child and family services, education, training, languages and literacy, housing, economic and business development.

Develop a national action plan for the implementation of the proposed First Nations Social Security Framework and creation of a First Nations Social Safety Net. This process must be inclusive of First Nations leadership - political and spiritual leaders, elders and others. The inclusive participation of all segments of First Nation society - women, men, youth, elders and persons with disabilities will be critical to ensure ownership of the final framework and plan by First Nations.

In Conclusion

The primary power to transform levels of well being and prosperity lies within First Nations and communities but most particularly with people. A vital line of action for social security reform must be to focus on empowering our people so they may participate meaningfully in society. To empower means to build their capacity to think, to speak, to consult one another, to resolve differences and to exercise power in building their future. This initiative has been one significant example of the empowerment of First Nation governments to truly determine their future and to exercise authority over the very elements that will ensure the survival of our collective Nations.

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