

COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Overview of the Study

In 1997 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 two primary objectives of the AFN Aboriginal Strategic Initiative (ASI) are:

- (1) *to focus expertise and resources from all available sources to develop creative, practical, positive realistic initiatives, which will improve the social well-being of First Nations*
- (2) *to define substantive and procedural issues related to achieving social well-being, and to recommend means of resolving them. This will be an essential step toward developing a framework for cooperative action to accomplish the long- term vision of an appropriate, comprehensive system to improve the social well-being of the First Nations.*

The mission statement of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative is to *develop a First Nations Social Security Safety Net that will be tailored to respond to present local socio-economic realities, which have become consistent with oppressive welfare dependency.*

The purpose of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative is to (1) maintain and enhance Canada's social security system (health, education and language, income security, social services, people with disabilities and youth issues, seniors and resource development; (2) promote a First Nations governed social security system; (3) resist federal off loading of First Nations treaty, constitutional and fiduciary obligations to provincial governments; (4) repatriate jurisdictional areas to First Nations; and (5) accommodate control of fiscal resources for a First Nations Safety net to First Nations.

The ASI research procedure encompasses a two-way process that consists of: (i) comprehensive research papers and (ii) case studies/effective practices covering topical areas in jurisdiction, child poverty, income support, education and training, language and literacy, labor market training, family and community building, support services, social assistance, health, environment, disabilities, resource development and the environment, and a comparative fiscal analysis.

This research document will address the comprehensive research findings on the topic of EDUCATION AND TRAINING. In addition we will be providing under separate cover a case study which describes the program activities that address social security/welfare reform from a Navajo perspective. This case study will review the effective practices of the Navajo Nation located in the four state area of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah regarding welfare reform.



Project Description

Katenies Research and Management Services was commissioned to conduct comprehensive research and complete an effective practices strategy into Education and Training and to produce a final product that would contribute directly towards the development of a National Strategy and Action Plan for the establishment of a First Nations Social Safety Net.

This final report is compiled in two sections, the first section outlines the history of the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative and the facts about conditions facing First Nations today and the findings of the comprehensive research exercise; and the second part contains the recommendations for a national strategy and action plan for future directions in social security reform.

Methodology

A multi-methodological approach was used in conducting the comprehensive research. Various sources of information including documents, ERIC, the World Wide Web, key informants and authorities on First Nations education were identified and data were collected from them. A model was designed to collect both quantitative, as well as, qualitative data, using the research methodology of triangulation. Research data was collected regarding education and training and three primary areas were targeted: national, international and local community level programming. All pieces of information were then examined from these three perspectives.

The Research Questions

The research questions identified at the onset of this project were as follows:

- (1.) Define the links between education and training and social security programming.
- (2.) Prepare a descriptive analysis of First Nations lifelong learning components. Special Emphasis should be made to lifelong learning as an element in developing strong economies and as a factor in alternatives to Social Assistance.
- (3.) Provide an overview of the issues in education and training with a particular emphasis to accessibility, financial and social supports, curriculum relevance and certification, delivery systems, pedagogy, cultural and linguistic needs and jurisdiction.
- (4.) Explore the education and training needs of current First Nations socio-economic situations in relation to economic development, employment, human resource development and planning, social assistance and poverty.



- (5.) Provide a description of the barriers and obstacles to developing a First Nations social security system that incorporates First Nations education and training considerations and needs, at the community level as they relate to a self-governing process of social security reform.
- (6.) Investigate the development of an ongoing mechanism or framework for accessing First Nation education and training to ensure needed skills and knowledge acquisition at the community level thought the process of social security reform.

Under separate cover the Effective Practices component of this research will discuss the following two research questions:

- (1.) Identify national and international situations where education and training have had an impact on social security programming.
- (2.) Identify First Nations situations where education and training have had an impact on social security programming.

Findings

Based on the analysis of the comprehensive research data the recommendations of the research team are as follows:

- (1) Education and the probability of finding employment and income are correlated. Our research indicated that Aboriginal people with a grade nine education or less, earn significantly less than someone with a university degree.
- (2) Poverty is one of the single most reasons why Aboriginal students drop out of school. The symptoms of poverty which are associated with limited educational success are: high dependency on social assistance, poor nutrition, early/teen pregnancies, domestic violence/child abuse, substance and drug abuse, lack of role models, inadequate housing, under-employment and/or unemployment and low self esteem.
- (3) Many First Nation student experience failure in school due to differences in value systems, language barriers, differences in pre-school year experiences, teachers are not trained to work with Native or impoverished children, the education program is not holistically designed, testing mechanisms are not culturally relevant and the curriculum is not always culturally relevant.
- (4) Access to education is limited for some First Nation individuals due to: lack of



transportation, remoteness of habitat, severe poverty, lack of financial and social support systems/resources, lack of child care services, poor housing and nutrition, limited access to technology, excessive responsibilities in the home, and language and cultural barriers.

- (4) One of the most pressing needs in First Nations education are those which relate to career and technology training. As a result of Social Security Reform initiatives in the United States and Canada new education systems are being designed that facilitate "life relevant learning" and correspondingly "lifelong learning."
- (5) Reduced welfare dependency is contingent upon long-term sustainable employment generation; that is for those who are currently on social assistance to become contributors to the economy they must be provided with long term sustainable employment (and training).
- (6) The relationship of education and training to social assistance dependency is related. Lower educational attainment results in: lower wage earning ability, problems with the law, problems with drug and substance abuse, frustration, social and personal problems, poor self-concept, limited communication skills (written and orally), limited knowledge of technology and technological advances and increased dependency on remedial programs such as social services, housing subsidies and other forms of income.

Conclusions:

Social Security Reform must be First Nation controlled. It must be under the sanction of First Nations and accountable to First Nations citizens. Social Security Reform must also be First Nation determined - designed and developed with community needs as a priority.

Finally, Social Security Reform must be First Nation specific - it must be culturally and socially relevant to First Nation philosophies and beliefs. It must also be managed and delivered within the community.



Background on Social Security Reform from a First Nations Perspective

This overall study is the result of a federal government imposed reform process for Canada that was introduced in September 1994 as part of a deficit reduction exercise. It was the contention of the federal government that "a strong economy is the essence of a strong society." In the discussion paper Improving Social Security in Canada a government plan for social reform was outlined in detail. Three major categories of Social Security Reform were proposed, they were **WORKING** (*jobs in a new economy*), **LEARNING** (*making lifelong learning a way of life*) and **SECURITY** (*building opportunity for people in need*).

The Assembly of First Nations was funded to do a national consultation on this document and the result was a Consultation Paper on Social Security Reform (1994). This report outlined the positions of First Nations as they pertained to a reform process that was never designed to account for the diversity of Canadian cultures, much less that of First Nations. As a result of AFN's response document, the National Aboriginal Strategic Initiative project was undertaken. The ASI project was created to operate for two years with a long term goal of reducing the inter-generational dependency of First Nation citizens on social assistance programs and welfare.

Summary of the First Nation Position

First Nations overwhelmingly report (AFN, 1994) the history of the relationship between the Government of Canada and First Nations has been plagued with a century of policy and laws devised to keep us out of mainstream prosperity, and isolated on reserves in the worst of conditions. Treaty relationships between sovereign nations spelled out terms between the Crown and First Nations that were one of "trust." This trust relationship means to First Nations that the Government of Canada will fulfill its legal obligations entered into during the treaty-making period (obligations which were traded in exchange for First Nations land).

The lack of recognition of our Aboriginal and Treaty rights and our status as governments remain at the root of many socio-economic ills experienced by our communities. This has resulted in inherent conflicts of interest which have continually undermined the relationship between First Nations and the Crown.

A bilateral process must be implemented with the federal government, based on our treaty right and aboriginal rights. First Nations would develop their own policies and programs, with the corresponding transfer of jurisdiction from other governments to carry out responsibilities in such areas as health, welfare, education, housing, child welfare, employment, training and social development.

First Nations see the ability to exercise basic powers of government consistent with the treaty and



aboriginal rights as a basis for development of social policy and programs based on First Nations control, need, responsiveness, quality and standards.

Facts About First Nation Communities

The Federal Government in its interactions with First Nations communities must acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal people and recognize that they do not constitute one homogeneous group. There is diversity in tradition and culture among the Metis, the Inuit, and status and non-status peoples. Contributing to this diversity are the various geographical locations where aboriginal people reside: rural, urban, on-reserve, off-reserve, Inuit communities, Metis settlements, isolated and remote areas and the North. The ultimate goal of the federal government's social policy must be to foster the full participation and contribution of all individuals, families and communities as members of Canada (AFN, 1994).

Aboriginal peoples of Canada continue to suffer social disintegration and deprivation under the administration of the federal government. The following conditions among First Nations continue to exist within the climate of mainstream reform on all levels:

- Violent deaths have historically been more common in aboriginal populations than in the Canadian populations at the rate of three times the national rate.
- Fifty four percent of first Nation housing units fail to meet basic standards of physical house condition - 31 percent have neither piped nor well water, 24 percent have neither piped sewage nor septic fields, 45 percent lack adequate fire protection services, 11 percent (communities) lack adequate electrification and 8 percent (communities) do not have electricity at all.
- The percent of dwellings without central heating on-reserve is seven times more than the Canadian rate of 5 percent.
- First Nations people on-reserve and off-reserve have an average family income at slightly more than one-half that of Canadian families. Off-reserve incomes are only slightly higher than on-reserve.
- 64 percent of the on-reserve registered native population in Canada is under the age of 30 compared to the rest of Canada. The population rate of Aboriginal people is growing at a rate 3 times as great as the Canadian average and social assistance dependency rates as of 1992, are 4 times that of the national rate.
- 30 percent of on-reserve people are unemployed and 43 percent are dependent on



social assistance.

- Illiteracy rates among First Nations today range from 65 percent to 75 percent. Equality of access to education is a fundamental right, yet in First Nations communities today, 50 percent fail to reach grade 12
- 66 percent of the First Nations adult population has no post-secondary education. In the early 1900's sixty percent of the First Nation school population was enrolled in federal schools operated by the Government of Canada. At that time only 50 percent of the teachers of aboriginal children were qualified to teach.
- 11 percent of the aboriginal student population on-reserve attend secondary schools within the community. This leaves the bulk of secondary education programming to provincial jurisdictions who are paid for their services through tuition agreements. Correspondingly teachers today are better qualified to teach, however, in most cases this is according to non-First Nation pedagogy and within an non-aboriginal world view.
- There are 53 aboriginal languages and 12 linguistic groups represented within the 633 First Nations communities in Canada. Speakers of aboriginal languages are decreasing steadily in that 63.1 percent of people over the age of 55 report being able to speak an aboriginal language, whereas only 21.9 percent of individuals between the ages of 5-14 report the ability to speak their language.
- Among aboriginal individuals 5 years of age and over: 50 percent don't understand any aboriginal language; 17.5 per cent understand a language, but cannot speak it; and only 32.7 per cent can actually speak an aboriginal language.
- 11 percent of aboriginal people report being taught in an aboriginal language during their elementary schooling. (AFN, 1997)

Indicative of the statistics described herein, it is a well documented fact (AFN, 1994) that social, as well as, education programs have been severely inadequate in meeting the needs of aboriginal peoples. First Nations feel that the social security and education systems, have lacked culturally appropriate and locally based policies. Social programs and services were never designed to help us overcome our problems, they instead created a greater dependency, largely because policy was developed by people with no understanding of the issues First Nations deal with on a day-to-day basis.

From a First Nation point of view the imposition of federal/provincial social security programs has been detrimental to the survival of First Nation communities. Federal and provincial designed



programs have helped generate a general and systemic individual, family and community dependency in place of historical self-sufficiency. These programs have contributed to the high rates of social and person dysfunction that are experienced by our people today. As well, the programs did much to undermine and weaken both our cultures and the various structures that we had developed to deal with the social security needs of our people.

Education Training and Social Security Programming

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 the 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 1.1
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 1.2
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, "Ed. Attainment and School Attendance" & 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 Aboriginals and Canadians.

In Table 1.3 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



the market price for goods traditionally traded by aboriginals. This indicates a number of very serious problems. 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 1.3
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. There are two major groups of programs that aboriginal peoples appear to be most over-represented in. They consist of programs that provide financial assistance to persons in need and remedial programs - these programs meet basic human needs and include social services and other forms of income transfers and housing subsidies. The remedial programs protect society, enforce the law and help individuals, families and communities cope with social, personal and health problems. Included in this category are health care programs, social services such as child welfare and alcohol and drug addiction treatment, and protection of persons and property (police and correctional services).

Numerous studies done by the Institute of Urban Studies, Canadian Council on Social Development, University of Winnipeg, University of Ottawa, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, for example, indicated 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 Aboriginals 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 certain services and the difficulties they had in accessing programs.



High rates of remedial and social services program use are indicators of social dysfunction that most nearly often accompanies poverty. When one examines the statistics on the incidence of poverty and ill health and other such indicators they find an alarmingly high dependence on financial assistance and remedial 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 1.4, if no effort is made to reduce the cost of the status quo, it will certainly increase. The largest cost to Aboriginals 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 1.4
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.

In another related study conducted in January 1991, a Senate committee studying child poverty in Canada indicated in its final report that if the current rates of poverty-induced dropping out persist over the next twenty years some of the likely economic costs will be: lost income and productivity (\$23 billion); forgone income and sales tax (\$8.4 billion); increased government transfer benefits, such as unemployment insurance and social assistance (\$1.4 billion); reduced contributions to UI (\$220 billion); and high unemployment rates (poverty-induced dropping out permanently adds 0.2 percentage points to the national rate). The report concludes that Canada would be better off economically by about \$33 billion if dropping out due to poverty alone could be eliminated over a twenty-year span. It is important to note that although these statistics were gathered on the impacts of poverty on the general Canadian public, the financial impacts on Aboriginal communities are very similar. We can even go on further to theorize that although Aboriginals are not specified in these Senate statistics the consequences of low educational attainment are comparable to the Aboriginal situation in terms of cost to the Canadian economy.

Lifelong Learning and the Development of Strong First Nations Economies

The necessity of education and community processes, such as economic development, have significant correlations in research. This is particularly highlighted by the authors Armstrong, Kennedy, et. al. Their research focused on university education and economic well-being. They found that education, in particular university education, is increasingly important in Canada's future well being in the international arena, they conclude "currency competition is neither the dollar nor the yen, it is knowledge."

Accordingly the question on most peoples minds is what will be required to fill the positions of the future? What will be required from schools to meet the management and professional requirements of industry, government and academia? As we noted in our previous chapter, education (including university) is critical for First Nations individuals in terms of meeting basic needs. 1991 Census figures confirm that the earning power of an individual with an university degree is significant compared to someone with an grade 12 diploma or less.

One of the most pressing needs in First Nations education are those which relate to career and technology training. A range of critical and useful training needs have been identified by First Nations. In many cases, the subjects and skills required are not being provided for in conventional



scholastic programs. Life skills training is important to human development and includes areas such as self-awareness, career planning, budgeting, organizational skills, study habits, child care, word processing, agriculture environmental and natural science, comparative religion, home economics, financial and business management, evaluation, herbal medicine, trades, business management, nutrition, etc.

In a national research study conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, DC. a "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 are:

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. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992)

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 requires 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 productively.

Table 1.5
A Comparison Of The Conventional Classroom
To That Of A
Workplace Focused Classroom

Source: Fort Worth Public Schools/A SCANNS Report for America 2000



The Conventional Classroom	The "New" Classroom
Teacher knows answer.	More than one solution may be viable and teacher may not have it in advance.
Students routinely work alone.	Students routinely work with teachers, peers, and community members.
Teacher plans all activities.	Students and teachers plan and negotiate activities.
Teacher makes all assessments. Information is organized, evaluated, interpreted and communicated to students by teacher.	Students routinely assess themselves. Information is acquired, evaluated, organized, interpreted, and communicated by students to appropriate audiences.
Organizing system of the classroom is simple: one teacher teaches 30 students.	Organizing systems are complete: teacher and students both reach out beyond school for additional information.
Reading, writing and math are treated as separate disciplines; listening and speaking often are missing from curriculum.	Disciplines needed for problem solving are integrated; listening and speaking are fundamental parts of learning.
Thinking is usually theoretical and "academic."	Thinking involves problem solving, reasoning and decision making.
Students are expected to conform to teacher's behavioral expectations; integrity and honesty are monitored by teacher; students' self-esteem is often poor.	Students are expected to be responsible, sociable, self-managing, and resourceful; integrity and honesty are monitored within the social context of the classroom; students' self-esteem is high because they are in charge of their own learning.



Consistent with U.S. methodologies and trends towards new education system systems that facilitate "life relevant learning" and correspondingly "lifelong" learning is the Conference Board of Canada's *Employability Skills Profile*. According to the Conference Board, "employability skills are the generic, attitudes and behaviors that employers look for in new recruits and that they develop through training programs for current employees. In the workplace, as in school, the skills are integrated and used in varying combinations, depending on the nature of the particular job activities." They go on to state that "these employability skills are developed in school and through a variety of life experiences outside school. The student, the family and the education system, supported and enhanced by the rest of society, share this responsibility."

The three skills described by the Conference Board consist of:

- **Academic Skills** - *Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results. This involves communicating - understanding and speaking the languages in which business is conducted; listening to understand and learn; reading, comprehending and using written materials including graphs, charts and displays; and writing effectively in the languages in which business is conducted. Academic skills also include thinking - thinking critically and acting logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions; understanding and solving problems involving mathematics and using the results; using technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively; and accessing and applying specialized knowledge from various fields (eg. skilled trades, technology, physical sciences, arts and social sciences).*
- **Personal Management Skills** - *The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviors required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results. This involves positive attitudes and behaviors such as self-esteem and confidence; honesty, integrity and personal ethics; a positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health; and initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done. This also involves responsibility -the ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life; the ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals; and accountability for actions taken. Finally, this also involves adaptability - a positive attitude toward change; recognition of and respect of people's diversity and individual differences; and the ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done - creativity.*



- **Teamwork Skills** - *Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results. This involves working with others - understanding and contributing to the organization's goals; understanding and working within the culture of the group; planning and making decisions with others and supporting the outcomes; respecting the thoughts and opinions of others in the groups; and exercising "give and take" to achieve group results; seeking a team approach as appropriate and leading when appropriate, and mobilizing the group for high performance.*

Similar to the United States, Canada has adopted a new vision for action in education. The National Council on Education has adopted three priorities as its policy agenda to promote the collaborative renewal of education across Canada. They state:

All children must become.....

.... ready to learn.....

- * *all children must start school ready to learn and maintain their readiness throughout their lives*
- * *each community must ensure that the proper nurturing of children receives the highest priority*

....ready to work....

- * *children must acquire the new generic skills for employability and self-employment: academic, personal management and teamwork skills*
- * *schools and businesses must collaborate to facilitate the transition between education and work*

....and lifelong learners....

- * *schooling must provide the foundation skills for children to become lifelong learners at work and in the community.*
- * *Canada must become a learning society, develop a clear commitment to value and promote lifelong learning. (1997)*



Education is in a state of flux in Canada. Its' impact on First Nations is significant. While education is evolving around us we too are evolving by creating our own First Nations controlled education authorities based on our own philosophies, traditions and beliefs. The key to a system that works is that it must be relevant and meet the needs of the people it is designed to serve. we certainly can borrow from the trends toward change across Canada - this is a necessity as we prepare ourselves for the next millennium. However, we will do so in our own way and in our own time, as we will illustrate in the next few chapters.



Lifelong learning defined

The very nature of these words suggests that learning and lifelong do not take place only in adulthood but throughout life from birth to death. According to Galbraith (1992) "the word life conjures up definitions that range from political, religious, sociological, historical, anthropological and psychological perspectives. Understanding life involves determining how society measures it and views it in relationship to these various perspectives. Life is composed of the growth and development of the human being that takes place from birth to death." Lifelong denotes this time span. Education is defined as those processes, events, activities, and conditions that assist and encourage learning.

Education is deliberate (planned) and unintentional (random) (Galbraith 1995). **Deliberate education** is that which is provided by schools such as elementary and secondary, college and university, proprietary schools, university extension, and community education. It is also provided by non-school organizations such as private industry, professional organizations, trade unions, military services, community organizations, churches, and other community-based educational agencies. Another source of deliberate education is by oneself though various forms of individual and self-directed study.

Unintentional education (Galbraith 1995) is education provided from everyday work experiences; from friends and contact with family and home experiences; from the mass media, such as television, movies, and radio; and from everyday contact with the environment through recreation and entertainment, travel, and community activities.

Lifelong education is defined as a process of deliberate and unintentional opportunities that influence learning throughout the life span. It is a process of accomplishing personal, social, and professional development throughout the life span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives (Dave 1976) .

From a First Nation point of view education is lifelong. It is from "cradle to grave" and is a balance of life experiences and formal knowledge acquisition. Balance in education is interpreted through the various symbolic forms of the Medicine Wheel. The medicine wheel reflects the world view and cultural beliefs of Aboriginal people. It is a circle that elders and teachers use to explain and teach. To live a balanced life means to be aware of movement toward harmony in the interconnectedness and interdependence of all entities and to express that harmony is one's relation with them. The sacred circle is a mirror which serves as a system of meaning reflecting the essential interconnectedness, harmony and balance among all beings (Coggins, 1990; Fiddler & Sanderson, 1991, Bopp et al. 1988)



Aboriginal belief systems can contribute a unique perspective for understanding the values, attitudes, and perceptions of an aboriginal world-view. This world view interprets community relations in ways that are consistent with aboriginal realities rather than non-aboriginal interpretations of them (Nabigon, 1991).

For First Nations, philosophy of education is based on a Creator ordained system of life. It incorporates the principles of wholeness, integration, respect for the spiritual and natural order, and balance. It serves to nurture and strengthen the physical, intellectual, social, and moral fabric of individuals, families, and community. It encompasses a holistic perspective for the preparation for life. Education is perceived as facilitating genuine freedom of choice in selecting an occupation, place of residence, and in achieving self-fulfillment. It serves to enable individuals and communities to participate effectively and fully in formulating and meeting their own goals socially, economically, and politically to continue to be free and self-governing First Nations.

Education provides the setting in which First Nations individuals can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in First Nations' traditions and cultures. Education must be shaped by those values which are most esteemed in First Nations cultures. While values can be understood and interpreted in different ways by different cultures, it is very important that First Nations individuals have a chance to develop a value system which is compatible with their own.

The essence of a First Nations educational philosophy was revealed in the 1973 *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy paper. The results of the national study *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future (1989)* clearly indicated that the statement of values contained in the 1973 paper accurately reflected First Nations Education philosophy. This philosophy encompassed the values of:

- * self-reliance
- * respect for personal freedom
- * generosity
- * respect for nature
- * wisdom

Correspondingly, First Nations indicate (AFN, 1989) the goals and type of programming found in a school system should be two fold: (1) *education should prepare children to gain the necessary skills for successful living and to contribute to community and (2) education should reinforce the student's cultural identity.* The teaching of First Nations heritage and the learning of traditional skills must advance in conjunction with academic skills.



Curriculum Relevance

First Nations believe that it is the role the community to exercise jurisdiction over its educational systems and to make programs totally relevant to each distinctive First Nation culture. All external resources and forces must respect and support this principle of community responsibility. Education, at its best, is an intensely practical, experiential, and lifelong process in which all members of the community become active contributors and benefactors. Great importance is placed by many First Nations on traditional values and culture. Traditional First Nations education was largely an extended family nurturing system in which the young developed vital character and life skill attributes. Qualities of modesty, patience, persistence, morality, integrity, self-control, resourcefulness, courtesy, helpfulness, courage, trust, respect, and harmony were actively encouraged. This was an experience-based and spiritual-based education model of the highest order

Serious conditions of alcohol and drug dependencies, family violence, child abuse, education failures, unemployment, incarceration, housing deficiencies, disease, and violent deaths continue to exist in many First Nations communities. These conditions, as we stated earlier, indicate the extent to which government defined and imposed programs have generally undermined First Nations values. The personal outcomes to be achieved by a traditional value-based system of education are the development of a strong moral character; appreciation of spiritual and cultural values; respect for sound traditions; a responsible approach towards life; respect and concern for the rights of others regardless of race or creed; and willingness and capacity to act in the best interests of one's family and community.

Strong cultural values, First Nations identity in students, and mainstream academic and technical education are not incompatible or contradictory, but in fact the former enhances one's capacity to deal with and master the latter. With a solid grounding in one's own culture and positive identity, students become much higher achievers in all areas of education and life.

The following is a sample from the United States of how Native Americans view the contrasts of "instruction" and "education." This comparison consists of two modes of guiding the young in the "moving course of history - how mankind has swung from the mode of guidance to the other."



Table 1.6
Overview of Systems of Guiding the Young in Various Cultures

<i>INSTRUCTION</i>	<i>EDUCATION</i>
<i>Science - control over things</i>	<i>Humanities - Living in harmony with things</i>
<i>Catabolism - exploitation</i>	<i>Anabolism - conservation</i>
<i>Law and Order</i>	<i>Spirit and Freedom</i>
<i>The Orderer</i>	<i>The Inspirer</i>
<i>Instrumental Leader</i>	<i>Expressive Leader</i>
<i>Reason (labored, gradual, specific)</i>	<i>Intuition (a gift, spontaneous, comprehensive)</i>
<i>Commandment</i>	<i>Counsel</i>
<i>Skills</i>	<i>Understanding</i>
<i>Cleverness</i>	<i>Wisdom - the knowledge of relationships - Harmony</i>
<i>HOW? - the manipulator's questions</i>	<i>WHY? - the philosopher's questions - also the child's question.</i>

In an Native American System of Education (*Bluecloud, 1997*) there are five principal mysteries to life:

1. **WHO AM I?** Taught in the naming ceremony (Necessary in nearly every culture and in every organization and religion)
2. **WHO IS MY BOTHER?** Taught in the "making of relatives" ceremony. (Necessary for us to keep titles like "brother" "sister" "mister"... Titles let us know our interdependence.
3. **WHO IS IN CHARGE?** Spirit is everywhere. (We use computers and we become what we use).
4. **WHAT IS HAPPINESS?** Is it acquisition and exclusion; or is it sharing and love? (according to native belief, the happiest person is the one who can get along with the least).
5. **WHAT'S COMING AFTERWARDS?** For Native people, existence is a circle. Death is not an end.



Table 1.7
Contrasts Of Native And Non-Native Values

Source: Bluecloud, 1997

	NATIVE VALUES	NON-NATIVE VALUES
<i>FAMILY</i>	<i>Clan</i>	<i>Nuclear Family</i>
<i>TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE</i>	<i>By word of mouth</i>	<i>By writing books</i>
<i>PEACE</i>	<i>Harmony</i>	<i>Personal peace - sought within the individual</i>
<i>HEALTH</i>	<i>The body and soul are one</i>	<i>A scientific viewpoint is taken to restore bodily health</i>
<i>TIME</i>	<i>Natural time regulates activities with a NOW orientation</i>	<i>Clock time regulates with a FUTURE orientation</i>
<i>WILL POWER</i>	<i>Fatalism - man cannot alter events</i>	<i>Self-determination - the world can be altered by man's will</i>
<i>OWNERSHIP</i>	<i>Clan systems dictates ownership which is carried on through the mother</i>	<i>Legal ownership - passed by law</i>
<i>PROPERTY</i>	<i>Communal</i>	<i>Private property</i>
<i>SECURITY</i>	<i>Security is found within the family and clan (WHO AM I?)</i>	<i>Security is found in success (WHAT HAVE I DONE?)</i>
<i>AGE</i>	<i>Respect for wisdom and the experience of age</i>	<i>Medicare</i>
<i>WORK</i>	<i>Work when necessary</i>	<i>Work for itself</i>
<i>STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY</i>	<i>Non-competitive</i>	<i>Competitive</i>
<i>TABOOS</i>	<i>Explain evil by spirit</i>	<i>Explain evil by science</i>
<i>UNNATURAL HAPPENINGS</i>	<i>Witchcraft</i>	<i>Do not go to the primary cause</i>
<i>ADAPTABILITY</i>	<i>Reason why is sought</i>	<i>progress is the goal</i>



<i>RELIGION</i>	<i>Myth and example by synthesis</i>	<i>Dogma and instruction by analysis</i>
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Table 1.8
Comparison Of Values Native And Non-Native

Source: Bluecloud, 1997

<i>NATIVE VALUES</i>	<i>NON-NATIVE VALUES</i>
<i>Leaders are servants</i>	<i>Leaders are Masters</i>
<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Competition</i>
<i>Group emphasis</i>	<i>Individual Emphasis</i>
<i>Passive</i>	<i>Assertive</i>
<i>Informal Courtesy</i>	<i>Formal Politeness</i>
<i>Patient</i>	<i>Impatient</i>
<i>Sharing</i>	<i>Saving</i>
<i>Time-Constant</i>	<i>Time- Fleeting</i>
<i>Respect for Age</i>	<i>Respect for Youth</i>
<i>Harmony with Nature</i>	<i>Conquest Over Nature</i>
<i>Religion - Way of life</i>	<i>Religion - Segment of Life</i>
<i>Non-verbal</i>	<i>Verbal</i>
<i>Extended Family</i>	<i>Nuclear Family</i>
<i>Tradition</i>	<i>Novelty</i>
<i>No Eye-to-eye Contact</i>	<i>Eye-to-eye contact</i>
<i>Holistic Problem solving - Vision of Total</i>	<i>Analytical Problem Solving.. Piece by Piece</i>
<i>Happiness = Spiritual Harmony</i>	<i>Happiness = Wealth Accumulation</i>



Poverty Impacts on Educational Success

The symptoms of poverty are devastating to First Nation communities especially when reforms to reverse poverty's trend have been unsuccessful. The frustration and victimization that created a history of misery for First Nations can be seen in examples of low self esteem found in many native communities today. Learning requires a sense of positive identity that is lacking in current policies regarding educational success for Native people. Many times this is created by low standard or inadequate housing. Feeling comfortable and accepted in an educational setting corresponds to students' standards of living outside that environment. Learning success requires standards that offer hope and dignity to students not only in the classroom but extending to the Aboriginal community. However, one of the pitfalls to both low self-esteem and a high standard of housing is the dependency on social assistance. Empowerment in any society requires its' peoples to be pro-active. First Nations communities are no different. Poverty has a telling way of making people reactive, not pro-active, resulting in high dependencies on social assistance that can lead to **under-employment** or **unemployment**. Employment establishes a pattern of positive behavior expected both in successful learning and ultimately in the work force. **Under-employment** makes it difficult to establish this pattern, while **unemployment** may make attempts at successful learning unattainable. Combine these themes with undernourished students or students afflicted with poor nutrition and the compound impact on successful learning becomes obvious.

All of the above themes of poverty lead to education of a different type. Native youth tend to focus their learning on conflicts in society, not society's educational successes. Tendency toward domestic violence, substance abuse, early teen pregnancies and criminal incarceration cover a few of the alternative curricula facing native youth. Combine this with high drop out rates and the lack of adequate role models and the future looks grim (Parnell, 1976). Poverty creates all the above and it needs to be addressed as part of Educational and Social Reform

Educational Characteristics and Barriers to Achievement

The more specific issues that create failure in many First Nations students can be understood through the many differences found between native and non-native culture. Many native students experience a "culture collision" when they enter school. The cultural and language differences collide when schools fail to consider the differences in value systems between native and non-native culture. This begins at an early stage of development in the lives of potential students. The First Nation pre-school year experience differs dramatically from the non-native student. This pre-school period leads to some obvious problems. Often native students have trouble understanding non-native concepts, usually caused by language and other cultural differences. Yet, language barriers are not only a native problem. School curriculum is often based on Anglo, middle-class, urban values with little or no Native content. Few teachers are trained to work with First Nation or poor children, and there are few native counselors to work with native students in the school systems.



These achievement barriers combined with a curriculum that does not consider the holistic perceptions of First Nations people creates limited participation in the school by natives. This further leads to less culturally relevant forms of assessment or judging the educational characteristics of these students.

Accessibility to Education

Many First Nation students have limited educational access due to previously discussed themes such as: severe poverty, language and cultural barriers. Other themes also put a limit on educational success for First Nations students namely: poor housing, nutrition and drug and substance abuse.

Accessibility is also hindered by geographical and social problems facing First Nation students. Many students are hampered by the extreme remoteness of their villages or communities and find it difficult to stay updated on programs that could help their learning. Even for those native students not living in remote areas, there is still a lack of transportation, thereby making their learning success more challenging. Combine these roadblocks with the potential for excessive responsibilities at home, and accessibility to education becomes more problematic.

Social problems are also a part of an assessment of student success. The lack of financial, social support systems and resources puts a severe burden on an already overburdened First Nation student. Limited access to technology and other learning tools add to this by making the Aboriginal student socially out of touch and technologically inadequate.

Curriculum is Not Relevant if it is Not Culturally Specific

First Nations students must have access to an education that is meaningful and meets the needs of the learner. Curriculum development is the logical next step to this problem. Such a curriculum would be characterized by a holistic approach that is characteristic of native learning. This is accomplished by incorporating the history and culture of the learner along with the learners' language and beliefs into a comprehensive curriculum filled with facts from many disciplines; combined with a holistic, First Nation point of view.



Specifically, the native influence in this curriculum would combine spiritual, mental and physical influences along with more traditional learning technologies. The approach would include common native assumptions and beliefs. Non-threatening activities would be a part of this curricular approach along with a mandate to keeping it socially responsible and consistent with First Nations traditions. It would allow learners to make mistakes while encouraging curiosity and questioning. Generally, First Nations education must be based on **modesty, patience, persistence, morality, integrity, self-control, resourcefulness, courtesy, helpfulness, courage, trust, respect and harmony**. The above changes in curriculum would set the stage for teaching these general native themes.

Relationship of Education and Training to Dependency on Social Assistance

The history of dependency on social assistance in native communities puts into question the historical practices regarding First Nations education and training. Reform is evident if Aboriginal people are ever going to break free of dependent social practices that work against a person's freedom to learn. Dependency on the social system creates inherent problems. Continued dependency on the system evolves into a climate where lower wage earning ability is taken as the norm. Higher dependency on social assistance and transfer payments creates frustration and poor self-concept leading to increased dependency on remedial programming such as social services, housing subsidies, and other forms of income. With limited oral and written communication skills, it becomes apparent the number of legal and social problems that develop as result of dependency on social assistance. Again, the recipient of this phenomenon is native education and training.

Benefits of Work for Welfare Programs

The United States is an example of Welfare Reform where various results have occurred. There has been a reduced dependency on income security mechanisms that would normally allow people to remain on welfare as opposed to self-improvement. This has increased self-sufficiency in the labor market and has helped to stabilize a constantly fluctuating economy. These two changes have begun the trend toward reduced welfare expenditures by the U.S. government. (Let it be noted that the bulk of welfare recipients in the USA are single mothers who are predominately black).



In Canada the types of welfare recipients vary much more than in the United States. One group consists of people who are *too young or too old to work*. Native people make a sizable proportion of this group. Others *have little education or work experience*, again we see the native population falling into this category. Another category, similar to the USA, *are single mothers who need assistance to survive economically and socially*. Native populations figure significantly into this category. Other Canadian welfare recipients are: *disabled people whose needs are not accommodated by the current system, formally educated people with work experience but have no job and the structurally unemployed (INAC, 1995)*. All of these recipients are unemployed, some temporarily, and some for long periods of time for a variety of reasons.

The Current Trend in Canada for Social Security Reform is based on Specific Strategic Initiatives

In Canada there is a growing concern for testing new options in the area of reform in training, income security, social services and learning. Basically these programs are exploring news ways to help people move from welfare-to-work while eventually finding more cost-effective approaches to labour market programs.

Many of the lower cost programs offered by the U.S. federal and state governments were a combination of job search, work experience and on-the-job training. These programs targeted those who were "employment ready" to those who were severely disadvantaged and in need of employment and training. When more disadvantaged recipients participated in such programs impacts tended to result in welfare savings rather than substantial increases in earnings. (INAC 1995). Evaluations of these American programs generally found that:

- On the average, welfare savings were smaller than the earning gains for single parents;
- The most job-ready welfare recipients did not benefit from the program (they would have found jobs anyway without the assistance of the program);
- Earning gains are concentrated on the middle group of those returning to welfare;
- Most of the welfare savings and smaller, less consistent earning gains are concentrated on a more disadvantaged group (e.g. those welfare recipients who were long term recipients with no recent employment);
- Mandatory job search to large numbers of people may maximize welfare savings and job holding but will not usually get people better-paying jobs nor benefit the more disadvantaged;



- Higher cost services to a selected population can get people jobs with somewhat greater earnings but will produce lower welfare savings per dollar invested;
- **EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS IMPACTS DID NOT OCCUR WHEN RESOURCES PER ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL WERE TOO LOW TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT DIRECTED ASSISTANCE OR WHEN PROGRAMS WERE OPERATED IN A RURAL VERY WEAK LABOUR MARKET (INAC, 1995); and**
- Overall, welfare-to-work programs usually had a positive impact on government budgets. This was in the form of increased taxes and reduced transfer payments.

Systemic and Personal Barriers to Individual Self-Sufficiency

The labour market and the welfare and education systems have produced dis-incentives to self-sufficiency. Specifically there are areas in Canada that are notorious for their lack of job opportunities with little or no economic growth. Native people fall into some of these troubled areas where there are poor quality jobs or financial insecurity associated with unstable or short term jobs such as seasonal work. There are systemic problems where the system is bigger than the people in it and the system adds to these circumstances by imposing an excessive marginal tax rate on earned income and the loss of health care benefits upon returning to work.

Barriers to self-sufficiency are not only inherent in labour, welfare and educational systems. Low self-esteem resulting from long period of social assistance lead to drug and alcohol problems among native people. All of this leading to the lack of basic education and literacy which are essential for improving self-sufficiency (INAC, 1995).

Key Factors to Success

According to the USA experience the freedom to experiment and develop programs which can respond to local needs appears to be the key success factor. A reformed program will benefit from voluntary participation where Aboriginal people feel the freedom to request participation and not have it mandated by a larger government. These programs could be designed for specific users and tailored to fit each client's needs. This could be accomplished by separating benefit entitlement and program services. Using well defined procedures for staff recruitment, training, supervision and evaluation, would lead to high expectations and quality of service. First Nations would benefit from this approach as a holistic focus to program planning would recognize the interrelated elements necessary to move from a welfare dependency to economic self sufficiency. The reform could succeed if personalized planning takes place, including the use of pre-vocational services such as literacy training, detoxification and personal counseling.



Sequential programs would be offered creating even more flexibility in the areas of: life skill training, job-search training, job-maintenance training and follow up counseling. One area that fits closely with First Nation values is the area of an internship where visual hands-on experience adds to the student's learning. This is closely associated with many native cultures and traditions and minimizes the risk of failure at many stages of development.

These and other areas will help social security reform improve the lives of Aboriginal people across Canada. These reforms will have a higher chance for success if they are *relevant and apply to First Nations culture, values and beliefs*.

If welfare-to-work initiatives are to successfully alleviate dependency and poverty, complimentary policies are required. Examples of policies that are directed at “making work pay” are (INAC, 1995):

- (1) Strengthening the child support collection system and having the federal government guarantee child support payments if fathers do not pay.
- (2) Increasing the minimum wage, reducing tax rates on earnings.
- (3) Providing adequate, affordable and accessible child care through subsidies.
- (4) Offering housing assistance through non-profit or co-op housing, affordable sector housing or rental subsidies.

Implications for First Nations

There are four rules which apply in the administration of social assistance for Aboriginal people in Canada. They are:

- (1) **Social Assistance on-reserve:**
On-reserve social assistance is funded by INAC whether for native or non-native residents and regardless of which institution has responsibility for administration
- (2) **Social Assistance to *Indians* off-reserve**
Social assistance for off-reserve natives is funded by the combination of the province or territory and the Government of Canada under the Canada Assistance Plan.
- (3) **Social Assistance to Metis**
There is no provision of the funding or the administration of social assistance for Metis people.



(4) Social Assistance to the Inuit

The funding and administration of social assistance for Inuit conforms to the rules in application for on-reserve Indians in the province or territory in which the person resides (INAC, 1995).

Examples of INAC programs intended to reduce Aboriginal dependence on social assistance and promote economic development and employment are as follows:

Work Opportunities Program

The *Work Opportunity Program* was established in 1972 to use social assistance funds and monies from other sources to create short-term employment experiences for welfare recipients, based on projects intended to result in community betterment. The target group for the program was employable and unemployable people on-reserve and specifically people with disabilities, who are receiving social assistance. The major drawback to this program is that it could only be used for one year by an individual.

Band Work Process

The *Band Work Process* ran from 1977 until the early 1980's emphasized band management and planning and the development of employed initiatives that would reflect individual bands' needs and requirements. The target group for this program was individuals on-reserve who were presently on Social Assistance. The program was administered by the individual First Nation communities. The *Band Work Process* did not significantly improve the planning and coordination capacities of participating First Nations, nor did it have any significant impact on social assistance dependency.

New Employment Expansion Development Program (NEED)

NEED was initiated in 1983 as a joint venture of the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission and IANC, which administered the program. It lasted until the end of June 1984. The target group was individuals on-reserve who were on social assistance to create employment opportunities for unemployed native people.

Indian Community Human Resources Strategy (ICHRS)

The *Indian Community Human Resources Strategy* was initiated in 1985. The program provided funds for projects under five components to create long-term employment opportunities on-reserve. Social assistance entitlement could be used for up to one year to provide wages and/or training allowances. The target groups were Inuit and First Nation individuals residing on or off-reserve who were not obligated by the Indian Act to attend school; First Nations and Inuit communities; Tribal Councils, Associations of Bands or Inuit communities; and private and public sector agencies, Crown corporations, non-profit organizations and employers whose objective is to further human resources development opportunities for Indians and Inuit. (INAC, 1995)

The context in which “welfare to work” programs were applied to First Nation communities is not consistent with mainstream society. Programs that have certain benefits in major urban centres or rural areas are based on mainstream economies and Euro-Canadian culture, therefore, the benefits are not the same for First Nation communities.

Barriers to Success in First Nations Communities

A summary of the previous factors show certain barriers to the success or failure of programs designed for First Nations communities. One of the more daunting barriers is the need for **flexible funding** for all Aboriginal people. As communities change and grow a conflict arises when funding remains rigid while the communities dynamically continue to grow. At this point rigid limits on benefits negate flexibility in programming making the program appear more important than the people in it. One example is the mandate to address provincial regulations. This can be devastating to First Nations because it limits culturally specific approaches to programming.

Culturally specific approaches take time and a large barrier to success in First Nations communities comes from the amount of time spent on assessment of projects. There is a need for longer term projects (beyond one year). A longitudinal approach needs to be made for assessing long term success and benefits. This will give the needed amount of time to properly determine whether new approaches are valid and reliable to First Nation people. Short terms economic prospects result in over-reliance on unemployment insurance and other dependency oriented programs.



Reduction of Poverty Through Training and Economic Development

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 in support local enterprise than in government handouts. Native entrepreneurship (Barth, 1964) has a critical role to play in sustainable Native communities. Native 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 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.

To argue that there is a single culture for all First Nations in Canada would be gross distortion of reality. One thing however is common among most First Nations and that is the prolonged economic dependency and political disempowerment they have suffered under federal government rule (Lockhart, 1989). Furthermore, there is a prevailing assumption that on-reserve First Nations individuals are not engaged in productive enterprise outside of a variety of cultural activities (Usher, 1976 and Usher, 1982). Traditions such as trading, barter and other such enterprise that were customary among aboriginal peoples have been presumed to be lost. Some say that "Indian economic enterprise" does not exist. There is wide spread evidence (Nicholls and Dyson, 1983 and Ross and Usher, 1986), however, that there is a hidden and informal economy that is alive and well in North America and especially in the developing world of Latin America, South East Asia and parts of Africa (Beck 1988). "The poor and marginalized everywhere have ways of creating products and services they need in quantities and at prices they can afford, and have developed multiple ways of generating income."

In a study done in South Dakota on the informal economy of the Pine Ridge reservation the author uncovered more than ninety types of micro-enterprises in his community (Sherman, 1988). He also found that the businesses were not operating in isolation; that "they formed an intricate network of horizontal and vertical linkages."



Similarly micro-enterprises are alive and well in most Canadian First Nation communities. They are not labeled or advertised (Wolfe, Cunningham, Convey, 1989). They don't have to be. Everyone in the community knows where to find a mechanic, a taxi service or where the bootleggers are. They are not easily recognized or found by outsiders however (1989). Local people utilize these informal services all the time and are totally unaware of their significance to the community. Most First Nation Councils are encouraged to believe that only large government sponsored enterprises are legitimate economic activities. Micro enterprises in many cases are totally ignored in terms of their potential for developing communities.

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** eg. 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** eg. 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** eg. school-based programs that offer before and after-school care
- * **Increased school, community and parent collaborations** eg. increased involvement of businesses, parents and community groups in counseling; dropout prevention and apprenticeship programs
- * **Community development and social change** eg. 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** eg. 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** eg. 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.
- * **Equitable and efficient use of resources** eg. 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** eg. 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** eg. 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** eg. "alternative" or "authentic assessments; assessment and recognition of incremental student progress.
- * **Closer connections with work or college** eg. university outreach to students; school-to-work apprenticeship programs.

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.



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 are having 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 1.9
Proportion of Special Groups with Less than a High School Education

Youth (age 15-19 not attending school full time)	66.4%
Older Person Age 45-54 Age 55-64	54.4% 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 which 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.

Findings and Proposed Framework

Based on the analysis of the comprehensive research data the recommendations of the research team are as follows:

- 1) Education and the probability of finding employment and income are correlated. Our research indicated that Aboriginal people with a grade nine education or less, earn significantly less than someone with a university degree.
- 2) Poverty is one of the single most reasons why Aboriginal students drop out of school. The symptoms of poverty which are associated with limited educational success are: high dependency on social assistance, poor nutrition, early/teen pregnancies, domestic violence/child abuse, substance and drug abuse, lack of role models, inadequate housing, under-employment and/or unemployment and low self esteem.
- 3) Many First Nation student experience failure in school due to differences in value systems, language barriers, differences in pre-school year experiences, teachers are not trained to work with Native or impoverished children, the education program is not holistically designed, testing mechanisms are not culturally relevant and the curriculum is not always culturally relevant.



- 4) Access to education is limited for some First Nation individuals due to: lack of transportation, remoteness of habitat, severe poverty, lack of financial and social support systems/resources, lack of child care services, poor housing and nutrition, limited access to technology, excessive responsibilities in the home, and language and cultural barriers.
- 4) One of the most pressing needs in First Nations education are those which relate to career and technology training. As a result of Social Security Reform initiatives in the United States and Canada new education systems are being designed that facilitate "life relevant learning" and correspondingly "lifelong learning."
- 5) Reduced welfare dependency is contingent upon long-term sustainable employment generation; that is for those who are currently on social assistance to become contributors to the economy they must be provided with long term sustainable employment (and training).
- 6) The relationship of education and training to social assistance dependency is related. Lower educational attainment results in: lower wage earning ability, problems with the law, problems with drug and substance abuse, frustration, social and personal problems, poor self-concept, limited communication skills (written and orally), limited knowledge of technology and technological advances and increased dependency on remedial programs such as social services, housing subsidies and other forms of income.

Conclusion:

Social security reform must ultimately be controlled by First Nations people. This will require a First Nations sanctioned policy that allows native leaders periodic assessment of Social Security Reform. Without such sanctions, reform will not be accountable to First Nation communities. The emotional and cultural side of reform will be lost to others outside the native community who have little investment in change and growth. Accomplishment of the above goals can only be determined if Social Security reform is developed with the community needs as 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 Nations philosophy and beliefs. In practice this will require social security reform to be managed and delivered within the community.



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Appendices

