

# Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing

An Initiative of the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) Program  
of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  
and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



## Final Report

# Executive Summary

The Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing, the subject of this report, is an undertaking of the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA), created in 1999 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This Project began in February 2001 with a grant from SSHRC. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) also contributed to this Project.

Project partners were Affordable New Home Development Foundation (ANHDF), Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, City of Saskatoon, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) and Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. (CUMFI), Quint Development Corporation, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA), Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), Social Housing Advisory Committee (SHAC) and the University of Saskatchewan.

The primary goal of the Project was to build relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that would foster communities that were both culturally accommodating and affordable.

The Project's research attempted to determine the difference between what was available in housing and community services in Saskatoon and what was needed by its Aboriginal community. The Project succeeded in gathering a large volume of pertinent information on urban Aboriginal housing, living conditions and quality of life, giving Saskatoon a more detailed knowledge of its Aboriginal population than any other city in Canada. The Project's research objectives have been largely, if not completely reached. The stated goals in our original master plan have virtually all been met.

Most important the Project made great strides in building trust between the Aboriginal communities, the universities, the city, local community organizations and the homebuilders. The comprehensive co-operation characterized by this Project was innovative, perhaps not only in Saskatoon but also other Canadian cities. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and people eventually recognized the merits of such collaboration.

Another important outcome has been to empower Aboriginal people to gain more control over their destiny through participation in decision-making and by being heard. It is important that this Project should not be seen as yet another research project using Aboriginal people as subjects without involving them in original decisions. This Project has thus been a beneficial mutual learning experience between our Aboriginal and other partners.

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# Overview

## Mission Statement

The central vision of this CURA Project is to build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality, affordable housing options. This Project seeks to develop a better understanding of how to establish and sustain culturally inclusive partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, working to improve the quality of life through affordable, quality housing options in Saskatoon. The research will include a description and analysis of the processes that work (or do not work) when building relationships between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in an urban setting.

## Background

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), is an independent government agency that funds university-based research and graduate training in the social sciences and humanities. In 1999 it created the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA), a program enabling community organizations to join forces with university researchers to study what both parties identify as critical problems. The object of such study is the community's social, cultural and economic development.

The Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing, the subject of this report, is a CURA undertaking that began in February 2001 with a grant from SSHRC and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Project partners were Affordable New Home Development Foundation (ANHDF), Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, City of Saskatoon, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) and Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. (CUMFI), Quint Development Corporation, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA), Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), Social Housing Advisory Committee (SHAC) and the University of Saskatchewan.

The Project was managed by three directors: Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Professor in the University of Saskatchewan Department of Sociology, whose fields of expertise include Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal demographics; Priscilla Settee, Director of the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division's Indigenous Peoples Program whose fields of expertise include Indigenous knowledge systems; and Keith Hanson, President of Sun Ridge Residential, and influential member of community and the housing industry.

The primary goal of the Project was to build relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that would foster communities that were both culturally accommodating and affordable.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing were:

- Greater collaboration between community groups and universities
- Greater social, cultural and economic community development
- Better decision-making and problem-solving in communities
- Better research and teaching in universities
- Improved education and employability for students

A goal of the Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing was to determine the difference between what was available in housing and community services in Saskatoon and what was needed by its Aboriginal community.

Learning to build stable liaisons between those organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, that are trying to develop accessible housing was an important component of this Project.

The first step was to gather the first precise data on Aboriginal demographics and economic activity; the second was to ascertain Aboriginal housing conditions and requirements; the third was to look at the design of Aboriginal housing.

It was hoped the research would result in more Aboriginal training and involvement in the building trades, and changes to the national building code. Further, it was believed the lessons learned in Saskatoon could apply to other Canadian communities.

## **Process**

In its original conception this Project had three phases:

1. Basic research to update the demographic profile of Aboriginals in Saskatoon
2. Exploration of Aboriginal housing conditions and needs
3. Practical analysis of Aboriginal housing design and supply

The aim was to understand the gap between the housing options and community amenities available and what was needed to meet the cultural and social expectations of the Aboriginal community.

# **Project Management Structure**

## **Planning Circle**

Affordable New Home Development Foundation (ANHDF)  
Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission  
City of Saskatoon  
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN)  
First Nations University of Canada (FNUC)  
Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) and Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. (CUMFI)  
Quint Development Corporation  
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)  
Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA)  
Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP)  
Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC)  
Social Housing Advisory Committee (SHAC)  
University of Saskatchewan

## **Management Committee**

**Research Director**  
Dr. Alan B. Anderson

**Indigenous Director**  
Priscilla Settee

**Community Director**  
Keith Hanson

## **Project Coordinator**

Jacinthe Taylor

## **Conference Coordinator**

Philip McCloskey

## **Administrative Assistants**

Cindy Hanson   Tasha Hubbard   Connie Braun   Dion Tootoosis

## **Project Management Process**

The management committee (Alan Anderson, Priscilla Settee, Keith Hanson) established operational policies early in the Project to ensure consistent and transparent decision making. All research projects and activities were presented and discussed by the management committee prior to decisions being taken. The policy required that all decisions be supported by at least two of the three directors. One of the supporting directors had to be the Research Director (Alan Anderson).

All decisions were made at duly called management committee meetings and recorded in the official committee minutes. A conflict of interest policy was also established to ensure directors were not involved in decisions that involved organizations or persons closely held or related to them.

Research projects conducted by non-University of Saskatchewan proponents were controlled by a contract between Bridges and Foundations and the proponent. The contract set out financial terms, deliverables and time lines. Research activities conducted by University of Saskatchewan proponents (faculty, graduate students, and interns) followed standard University of Saskatchewan procedures.

The Project Coordinator (Jacinthe Taylor) provided administrative control of all projects, providing support and guidance, monitoring of progress and processing of progress reports to the management committee.

Financial control of the Project was managed by the management committee through a detailed budget management system. The University of Saskatchewan financial services provided monthly account reports that were continuously reconciled to the budget management system.





Photo by Kirsten Anderson

# Directors' Observations

**Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Research Director**

## **Objectives of the Project**

The Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing came into being early in 2001 as an initiative of the CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) Program of SSHRC (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) and CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). The stated central vision of the Project was “to build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality, affordable housing options.” The Project sought “to develop a better understanding of how to establish and sustain culturally inclusive partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, by working to improve the quality of life through affordable, quality housing options” in Saskatoon. With this emphasis on collaboration between partners, the research would pay particular attention to evaluating processes of building not just houses but more importantly relationships between the Aboriginal and general communities in the urban setting.

The Bridges and Foundations Project originally conceived a master plan which would involve three stages of research. First, basic socio-demographic research, including trends in urban Aboriginal population growth, a more focused analysis of Aboriginal population trends in Saskatoon, migration and mobility studies, and neighbourhood-level analyses of changing residential concentration and socio-economic profile. Second, specific research on housing conditions and needs, including inner-city surveys of residents, studies of housing types and living conditions, poverty and homelessness, urban infrastructure, and social inclusion/exclusion. A third stage would have a more applied focus on housing design and supply, including an analysis of housing types and proposed designs, housing supply and demand, the involvement of Aboriginal people in home construction and renovation, and the use of urban reserves.

## **Types of Research Projects**

There can be no doubt that the Bridges and Foundations Project has succeeded in accomplishing the goal of gathering more and better quality information on urban Aboriginal housing, living conditions and quality of life in Saskatoon. A very large volume of pertinent information has been accumulated, to the extent that this city now very likely has a more detailed knowledge of Aboriginal population than any other city in Canada. This said, however, there is also much more information which would have been useful and pertinent to collect. Nonetheless, an extremely wide variety of information was collected in this Project as a whole, covering the extraordinary diversity of the urban Aboriginal experience. It soon proved impractical, though, to conduct research in such well-defined stages.

With prolonged delays in obtaining detailed census data, as Statistics Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada processed data from the 2001 census, much of the demographic analysis remained incomplete until the last year of the Project. In the meantime, however, work

progressed in a number of detailed surveys of Aboriginal residents in Saskatoon neighbourhoods: a survey based on random sampling of Aboriginal residents; a very comprehensive survey of residents' impressions of their needs and the provision of local community services; a detailed study of the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood (having the highest Aboriginal proportion in the city, half the neighbourhood population); surveys of urban band members of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and the Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation; and surveys of clients of Aboriginal housing agencies, Cress Housing and SaskNative Rentals.

Several projects focused on community development, including Quint's studies of the Core Neighbourhood Development Council and Family Friendly Housing Initiative. A number of community instructional sources were developed by the Bridges and Foundations Project: a community resources manual and a video on affordable housing and community economic development, by Quint; a housing strategy policy and procedures manual by CUMFI (Central Urban Metis Federation Inc.); and an urban First Nations residential development manual by the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations).

Some projects concentrated on housing design and construction as well as the homebuilding industry, such as a project of the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association on community housing and design options, a study of Aboriginal perceptions of Habitat for Humanity, a report on affordable housing and home ownership – business case development for the Saskatoon market; and dissertations on straw bale construction and organizational management approaches utilized by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses. Project workshops addressed challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal housing in Saskatoon, financing and funding options for affordable home ownership for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon, and a housing design charette for the urban Aboriginal community. Several other projects looked specifically at apprenticeships and training for Aboriginal people in the homebuilding industry: two other SHRBA projects respectively examined the management and coordination of apprenticeship training opportunities in residential construction, and developed apprenticeship consultations to introduce young Aboriginal people to homebuilding; while another project studied Aboriginal involvement with apprenticeships in residential construction. Having Keith Hanson, with his ample knowledge of the Saskatchewan homebuilding business and his commitment to community development, as a Project Director proved an invaluable asset.

Student housing was the concern of several projects – one on Aboriginal post-secondary student housing, another on housing needs of students at the First Nations University of Canada, and a third on Metis student housing. On the other hand, another Metis project studied housing for elders. A major project examined the options of using urban reserves for residential purposes. Projects focusing on particular needs and problems included studies of design of affordable housing for stressed families, Aboriginal women fleeing violence, urban Aboriginal youth's sense of belonging in Saskatoon, HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal women, and the reintegration of former inmates back into the community. One intern reported on housing and race relations in Saskatoon.

Finally, a couple of projects examined the development of co-operative relationships between organizations and institutions participating in the Bridges and Foundations Project. And several hundred photographs were taken of Aboriginal housing and living conditions, as well as of the developing Aboriginal urban infrastructure in Saskatoon in a documentary photography project; selected photographs were used in conference displays, posters and publications of the Project.

## **Attainment of Anticipated Objectives**

Returning to the question of whether, or to what extent, the ultimate purposes of the Bridges and Foundations Project have been attained, let me attempt an answer in two main respects – research and partnerships. First, the anticipated research objectives have been largely, if not completely reached. As indicated already above, in the description of the range of particular research projects conducted under Bridges and Foundations auspices, the stated goals in our original master plan have virtually all been met eventually, albeit not necessarily in the timeframe or sequence originally anticipated. On the one hand, we would have liked to have been able to probe further into some important topical areas, such as the emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class, or the capability of the City of Saskatoon to effectively meet recommendations in the city housing plan, or more precisely the dynamics of the rental business as it affects Aboriginal residents. On the other hand, in any largely community-driven research agenda, many aspects of urban Aboriginal housing and living were examined in particular projects not originally planned; these projects turned out to be important and informative.

Second, concerning partnerships, it is my conviction that we progressed very well in building trust between the Aboriginal communities, the universities, the city, local community organizations and the homebuilders. While admittedly there had been some collaboration before between some of these sectors (such as between the city and the homebuilders), the more comprehensive co-operation characterized by the Bridges and Foundations Project was quite innovative, perhaps not only in Saskatoon but also other Canadian cities. From an Aboriginal standpoint, Aboriginal organizations and people had to be convinced of the merits of such broad collaboration, and tended to be understandably mistrustful of non-Aboriginal organizations and people. There was a prevalent tendency toward the feeling that Aboriginal organizations and people should and could deal with their problems – including an acute shortage of quality affordable housing – by themselves. Yet our research into, for example, the minimal Aboriginal participation in the homebuilding industry, problems faced by Aboriginal people in financing (necessary for improved housing), and the general level of pervasive poverty in the urban Aboriginal population, implied that far more could be accomplished to overcome such difficulties on a co-operative basis. Nor was the University of Saskatchewan sufficiently familiar with doing research on a large scale with the community, despite thinking that this would be a good idea. We found it to be somewhat problematic, though, that university academics and graduate students neither tended to prioritize community research nor housing research, obliging us to put substantial efforts into recruiting and developing interest, despite the community's interest in receiving assistance and expertise from the university. The Aboriginal institutions of higher education which collaborated in the Project, notably the First Nations University of Canada and the Saskatchewan Institute of Indian Technologies, seemed to be more interested in university-community research alliances, yet possessed less research expertise.

## **Aboriginal Empowerment**

A most important outcome of the Bridges and Foundations Project has been to empower Aboriginal people – provincial and city organizations, institutions, and not the least local residents – to gain increased control over their destiny through participation in decision-making and by being heard. In a sense, it is important that the Project should not be seen simply as yet another research project using Aboriginal people as subjects without involving them in original decisions on what and who should be studied and why, in developing research plans, in carrying out the actual research, and in translating research into effective policy and action. This Project has thus been a beneficial mutual learning experience between our Aboriginal and other partners.

To borrow a maxim from the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand/Aotearoa, they emphasize “kaupapa Maori” – the Maori way, a philosophy and worldview as well as a code of ethics and protocol. This involves an agenda which is *for*, *with*, and *by* Maori people. It is instructive to apply this agenda to an evaluation of the Aboriginal role in the Project.

Reviewing what has been accomplished, and how, first clearly the Project as a whole has been intended *for* Aboriginal people, by its very title and definition. Ultimately, of course, virtually all of the surveys and many of the other specific research projects have been aimed at giving voice to local Aboriginal residents in order to make recommendations for improving their living conditions, hence the enthusiastic support shown by so many residents. Second, from the outset, the Project was intended to be done *with* Aboriginal partners. We have enjoyed and profited from close collaboration on particular research projects with the FSIN, STC (Saskatoon Tribal Council), Cress Housing, SaskNative Rentals, SIIT, FNUC, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation, CUMFI and other Metis organizations. Yet given the relative novelty of this degree of collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners, and even between Aboriginal communities, in this endeavour, admittedly it did take time to build trust and confidence. Third, it is important to review the extent to which this research has been done *by* Aboriginal people. Our emphasis has consistently been on building partnerships *between* Aboriginal and other organizations, rather than to have all of the work done exclusively by Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, Aboriginal personnel have in many ways played very significant roles in the Project. Our Aboriginal Director (Priscilla Settee), our Project Coordinator (Jacinthe Taylor, whose office was located in SIIT), Conference Coordinator (Philip McCloskey), several other paid employees and interns, half of the scholarship holders and most of the thirty or more research assistants have been Aboriginal. Representatives of FSIN, MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan), FNUC, SIIT, and SaskNative Rentals sat on our Planning Circle. Aboriginal people have also played a major role in planning and directing particular research projects. So the training aspect of the Project could be seen as contributing significantly to Aboriginal empowerment, although we would have liked to have increased involvement of Aboriginal university faculty and students in the Project.

### **Where do we go from here?**

As the Project reached the end of its four-year contracted period, the question “Where do we go from here?” was increasingly voiced. Allow me some thoughts on this.

First, there is the question of continuity. Our community partners have expressed concern that after “using the community” to do research, academics are likely to simply move on to other things which may be more rewarding in professional academia. The feeling has been expressed that after all this work to build partnerships based on trust, of course this collaboration should continue to be built. It is imperative, therefore, that there should be processes in place to promote continued work together. It goes without saying, too, that especially for the wider community, dissemination of research results is paramount – you take (information) from the community, *and* you are obliged to give it back.

Second, this simple fact would seem to imply revision of conventional academic research methods in two respects: ethics and timing. Research ethics guidelines of Canadian universities may actually hinder collective research with Aboriginal communities. For example, it seems highly intrusive for researchers to engage in conventional random sampling techniques, armed with structured questionnaires, and to ask respondents to sign standard consent forms, especially

in an Aboriginal population; this interferes dramatically with traditional Aboriginal sociability. University ethics guidelines must become more flexible, taking into consideration the expectations of the local population being interviewed, as a simple matter of courtesy. Moreover community-driven research is just that: the community must play a significant role in determining what form the research should take, what questions should be asked, and the researcher must explain adequately how the community might benefit from this research.

We have found timing of such a grand-scale project as Bridges and Foundations – and similar projects under the CURA program – to be problematic and unrealistic. It takes at least a full year to build an effective project infrastructure; this can be an obvious part of building relationships between partners. Moreover it could take a year just to pull all the research together in proper dissemination form and to allow individual projects to produce quality reports. Any timeframe short of five years seems, in retrospect, far too constrained.

The penultimate question must be whether the Bridges and Foundations Project will result in improved housing and living conditions for the Aboriginal population. The many reports of the Project have suggested numerous policy recommendations. In the final analysis, it is up to our partners and governments to create meaningful changes.

For example:

Aboriginal organizations should continue to collaborate in diverse ways with non-Aboriginal organizations, especially the city and homebuilders, to develop improved housing and quality of life for First Nations and Metis residents; to play a more proactive role in developing meaningful research with the universities; to stimulate the learning of research and managerial skills; to develop policies and programs aimed at possible incentives for Aboriginal youth.....

Homebuilders need to continue to collaborate with Aboriginal people and organizations in order to work toward providing quality affordable housing options for the rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population; to promote more Aboriginal involvement in home construction in every trade and at every level; to reconsider how financial options and affordability may apply to the unique situation of urban Aboriginal residents.....

The University of Saskatchewan should not only prioritize Aboriginal education in every college, but also research project development with Aboriginal organizations and higher education institutions; universities could promote the increased involvement of faculty in research with the community; policies and programs should be developed aimed at the full integration of better-educated Aboriginal students into the labour force; universities should play a far more significant part in assisting students with affordable housing.....

The City of Saskatoon should implement policy recommendations from the city housing plan, particularly as these may relate to Aboriginal residents; should continue to promote improved race and community relations involving Aboriginal residents; and should continue to provide detailed demographic and socio-economic data on the Aboriginal population in the city.

Local community and neighbourhood organizations could work more effectively to assist Aboriginal residents to find better quality of life and affordable homes in neighbourhoods of choice; to improve landlord responsibilities; to work with the City to promote improved race relations in the community and to ensure better recreational facilities and green space, safer neighbourhoods, shops and services.....

In sum, let me conclude with this important point: that while all of the accumulated research findings have laid a firm foundation for policies which should result in improved housing and living conditions of Aboriginal residents, it is perhaps the very collaboration which has developed in this Project that is most important in the long term – continuing to work together could only prove highly beneficial to our common effort to improve the situation of Aboriginal residents. Saskatoon has made very significant advances in establishing this broad-based co-operation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations as well as between university and community. Now let us continue to build on this momentum in setting an innovative example for other Canadian cities.

### Priscilla Settee, Indigenous Director

The Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing was the first major SSHRC grant to clearly identify Aboriginal communities as participants and beneficiaries. In the past Indigenous people rarely participated or benefited from research and development resources. This may be attributed to the great expanse that lies between the academy and the community at large. It can also be attributed to the fact that until fairly recently there have not been many Aboriginal people with doctoral degrees. This is seemingly a standard, but I believe not entirely necessary, requirement for research. Aboriginal inexperience in the funding world resulted in minimal community participation in the Bridges and Foundations Project proposal design. I believe that it also contributed to the fact that initially there was some difficulty in attracting the Aboriginal community to apply for research funds. Despite the initial slow start, the Project provided an opportunity for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to come together and develop research projects and to examine some of the social and economic challenges facing our collective community. I also believe that the Project helped to develop research capacity especially among the Aboriginal community. The quantity and quality of research projects attests to the success of this unique Project. For many it was the first time that the two communities came together. The Project proved that there is room for partnerships in the research and development world between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. We are somewhat interdependent, and true partnerships can build healthy communities and a form of education for both communities. While this process takes more time and is more labour intensive I believe that it will accomplish more in terms of community involvement in research and community development in general.

This Project also faced many challenges. Research protocol and methodologies that are respectful of Indigenous communities should be developed. Though there is a need for partnerships, there is also a need for Aboriginal scholars and community people to direct their own research. As an Aboriginal academic I felt an allegiance more to the community than to the private sector or to the academy. To address the marginalization that I believe many Aboriginal community-based researchers experience there is an urgent need for opportunities for First Nations and Aboriginal communities to acquire research and development funds autonomously. Some would call this research sovereignty. The Project did not identify an adequate gender perspective and therefore inadequately addressed the needs of Aboriginal women, many of whom represent sole support of families with children. At a local level and similar to the University of Saskatchewan's Community University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) the Aboriginal community might have been invited to participate in the selection of research projects. This would have assured

more accountability to and been more inclusive of community and would have meant a broader range of applications. Culturally, Aboriginal people live more collective realities than individualistic ones. This fact has to be considered when research topics are decided. Theoretically research is intended to benefit communities; however more often than not individuals with established research history are chosen. They do not represent marginalized communities where the greatest need for development is felt. Good research can lead to important public policy development within the governmental context. Currently most public policies disregard the Aboriginal communities. Escalating Aboriginal poverty is testimony to this fact. Aboriginal communities, particularly in the North continue to provide raw materials through the mining and forestry sector, while Aboriginal poverty continues.

Aboriginal scholars and community people should be included throughout the entire research and development aspect of the Canadian grants world. As unpopular as it may sound the structural racism that exists within the funding world needs to be addressed, at all levels from research needs identification to selection of grant recipients. We can fix structures, which eliminate Aboriginal people from the research and development world, and this will be a first step towards establishing policies which eliminate discriminatory practices throughout public spheres, including the academy. Once Aboriginal people take their rightful places in building stronger communities many of the social and economic imbalances will be addressed. The days of monoculture perspectives will be eliminated.

Despite the shortcomings of the project, I believe some valuable research was produced and valuable lessons were learned. Vital links and relationships were developed between members of the community that were not possible before this Project. The sharing of information and expertise among the three colleagues was an invaluable experience.

### Keith Hanson, Community Director

The vision for the Bridges and Foundations Project was to develop a better understanding of the gap between what housing options and community amenities are available in the community and what is needed to meet the cultural and social expectations of the Aboriginal community, as well as how to satisfy these needs through sustainable cross-cultural relationships.

Among the supporting goals the Project was expected to attain were:

- The development of designs for affordable housing options and surrounding community amenities, through the eyes of Aboriginal families
- The recognition of the capacity for home ownership
- The development of new training/apprenticeship/recognition opportunities and subsequent increased access for the Aboriginal community

The Brides and Foundations Project was to provide a unique opportunity for development of the process and mechanisms for the functional exchange of knowledge, technical expertise and cultural realities, yielding a new understanding of cross-cultural housing needs, opportunities and initiatives.



The Bridges and Foundations Project was essentially about a process, not a product; a journey, not a destination. It is about building relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals through the process of working together to seek greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities for community development. The focus was on housing because in urban neighbourhoods shelter for Aboriginals often fails to meet contemporary standards.

Our touchstone for this Project was expressed as *“Building functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality, affordable housing options.”* As managing coordinators, we drew continual guidance and strength from this statement while encouraging, assessing and supporting research activities among our community partners.

As the Bridges and Foundations Project gained exposure and acceptance we observed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together, overcoming the mutual distrust that existed. This is very significant and would probably not have happened without the catalyst of Bridges and Foundations supported research activities. The information and understanding gained from the research may soon be outdated, but the relationships will continue and provide dividends for many years.

We envisioned that the Project would come to a natural end, not be extended or evolved. The Bridges and Foundations Project was to create an environment and opportunity for relationship building. By allowing the Bridges and Foundations Project to reach a predetermined natural conclusion, organizations and individuals understood the need to develop ways to continue working together. Time will be the judge but I have observed a blossoming of relationships, built on trust and mutual concern, which I believe will continue to work toward the implementation of urban Aboriginal housing options.

Wherever possible we encouraged Aboriginal groups and individuals to engage in research activities. The building of Aboriginal research capacity was evident through the continued involvement of many Aboriginal people in research activities throughout the project.

One of my personal interests relates to the housing delivery system, which includes all aspects of design and delivery of housing units, systems and neighbourhoods. Understanding the housing delivery system with its codes, regulations, technical requirements, financial constraints, resource needs and market realities requires significant study and involvement. The Bridges and Foundations Project has provided the opportunity for Aboriginal organizations to link with some of the traditional non-Aboriginal organizations that are at the centre of housing development. The opportunity to learn about needs, options, processes, risks and outcomes and to work with influential individuals within the system has been invaluable to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals and has helped form a foundation upon which to undertake mutually important development activities.

A good example of how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups are working together in developing new training/apprenticeship/recognition opportunities and subsequent increased access for the Aboriginal community is the work of the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA), its provincial counterpart the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association (SHBA) and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT). The trade based apprenticeship program in Saskatchewan is a well established, functioning, post-secondary education process; however, the training is not well aligned with the residential construction sector. The residential sector does not recognize trade designations except for those that are

related to the licensed trades in electrical, plumbing and pipefitting. The work of the home builders' associations has resulted in the designation (or pending designation) of many 'sub-trades' that align with common occupations in the residential sector. The home builders' associations' growing relationship with SIIT's Construction Careers program has resulted in the creation of many new job opportunities for Aboriginal workers and indenture of an increasing number of Aboriginal workers in the residential sector working toward their subtrade designation.

## **Project Management**

When the Bridges and Foundations Project proposal was first developed, a group of well meaning individuals and representatives of important organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, came forward to offer support. When the proposal was accepted by SSHRC, the challenge of assembling the community partners began. The first challenge required developing a working relationship between the three coordinators that would be responsible for managing the Project. Dr. Alan Anderson, Research Director, together with Priscilla Settee, Aboriginal Director, and Keith Hanson, Community Director, began the process of developing a working relationship that would carry the Project through development to successful completion.

Each of the three coordinators was originally selected because of unique knowledge, capacity, position and influence. The balance between perspectives and willingness to openly debate issues made for very interesting meetings, which were held weekly during most of the Project. Alan brought the traditional "ivory tower" approach to research, but also an eager willingness to blend that tradition with the great enthusiasm demonstrated by the community research partnerships that evolved. As a respected academic and strong community leader, Alan provided the coordination team with the gentle insight, perspective and guidance that helped create and evolve critical relationships among the community partners.

Priscilla brought the essential fulltime Aboriginal perspective to the management table. A strong supporter of developing research capacity within Aboriginal organizations and the Aboriginal community in general, Priscilla was a strong advocate for research projects being carried out by young Aboriginal researchers. She tirelessly encouraged Aboriginal organizations to get involved with the Project and challenged them to undertake research that would be of interest and value to them and the Bridges and Foundations Project. Priscilla also provided insight and perspective to Alan and me that helped us to facilitate the development of new working relationships between community partners. As a member of the university academic community through the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division, Priscilla provided guidance and support for the rigor imposed on all research activities by our management process.

Along with my understanding of and connection to the housing delivery system, I brought project management skills that helped the Bridges and Foundations Project run in an efficient and responsible manner. I found my time working together with Alan and Priscilla to be stimulating, enriching and certainly memorable. I will most certainly continue to stay connected with both of these exceptional people.

When the project first got underway, it was essential for the coordinators to start the process of relationship-building by spending time with all of the organizations that were part of the Planning Circle, plus other groups and organizations that were showing interest in the Project. Discussing the vision and Project goals, in terms of the interests and concerns of the Planning Circle members, took considerable time and effort. As these relationships became stronger and more

focused, research projects and activities began to formulate. The need to establish a fulltime administrative capacity to implement, monitor and support the growing research activity was satisfied with the acquisition of Jaci Taylor, a very capable Inuit woman, as our Project Coordinator. Jaci applied her ability to work with First Nations, Metis and non-Aboriginal people on a daily basis. As it turned out, Jaci's hard work, perseverance and professionalism represented key reasons the Project was able to accomplish so much in such a short period of time.

## **Outcomes**

Research work undertaken by various organizations and individuals represented both an interest to the researchers and value to the Bridges and Foundations Project in contributing to one or more of the stated research outcomes.

### Stage one research outcomes

1. Producing the most current, detailed and comprehensive socio-demographic profile of the Aboriginal population in Saskatoon.

#### *Contributing research initiatives*

- Survey of Urban Housing Needs (Muskeg Lake)
- S(City of Saskatoon)
- Saskatoon Aboriginal Neighbourhood Survey (U of S)
- Migration and Mobility Between Reserve and City (Whitecap)
- Socio-Demographic Study of Aboriginal Population
- Photography Project (Kirsten Anderson)
- Race Relations in Saskatoon (Cara Spence)
- A Survey of Cress Housing Clients (STC)
- Student Housing Assessment (SHIP)

### Stage two research outcomes

1. Producing informative and current data on Aboriginal housing conditions and needs.
2. Gaining a better understanding of the relationship between Aboriginal housing conditions, health and quality of life for Aboriginal residents.
3. A better appreciation of how the diversity of the Aboriginal population pertains to housing expectation.

#### *Contributing research initiatives*

- Community Voices (SaskNative Rentals)
- Socio-Demographic Study of Aboriginal Population (City of Saskatoon)
- Aboriginal Post-Secondary Student Housing (SHIP)
- Migration and Mobility Between Reserve and City (Whitecap)
- Aboriginal Homeownership and Renting (SIIT)
- Metis Student Housing Research Project (Broxbourne)
- Race Relations (Cara Spence)
- The City as Home (Gail MacKay)
- Photography Project (Kirsten Anderson)
- Metis Elders Circle Housing Research Project (Chenew Holdings)
- Video Production (Quint)
- Family Friendly Housing Initiative (Quint)
- Aboriginal Women Fleeing Violence (FNUC)

- Housing Needs of First Nations University of Canada Students (FNUC)

#### Stage three research outcomes

1. Formulate recommendations aimed at improving design and supply.
2. Research housing design and supply for Aboriginal people in the city.

#### *Contributing research initiatives*

- Affordable Housing Program (Muskeg Lake)
- The Creation and Operation of Residential Urban Reserves (Dr. Joseph Garcea)
- Urban Aboriginal Community and Housing Design Charette (AHDF)
- “Vibrant Groups”: Core Neighbourhood Development Council (Quint)
- Financial and Funding Options (Val Sutton)
- Partnerships in Urban Housing Projects (Nilson)
- Aboriginal Involvement in Apprenticeship (Val Sutton)
- The *Building Skills, Building Homes* Project (Carol Vandale)
- Apprenticeship Training Opportunities (SRHBA)
- Community Housing and Design Options (SRHBA)
- Urban First Nations Residential Development Manual (FSIN)
- CUMFI Housing Strategy Policy
- Saskatoon Habitat for Humanity Project (Hanna)

#### **Summary**

The Community-University Research Alliance project known as Bridges and Foundations, fostered understanding and capacity among community organizations resulting in relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals and a better understanding of the gap between housing needs and housing opportunities. Cross-cultural relationships have emerged that are working to embrace identified opportunities. Three totally different housing and community designs, part of the Design Charette project, are already in process. Financial opportunities and innovative legal structures to assist in bringing increased ownership opportunities to Aboriginal households have been identified.

Apprenticeship training and recognition opportunities have been implemented bringing the first of many subtrade designations, aligned with the residential job market. Aboriginal access to indentured employment positions has been substantially increased through the Bridges and Foundations support of industry based organizations. Scholarships/bursaries for Aboriginal workers have provided timely support for many workers as they move to develop careers in the housing sector.

While not without its flaws, challenges and frustrations, the Bridges and Foundations Project has nonetheless resulted in cross-cultural co-operation related to the development of culturally supportive communities and appropriate housing options. Given the opportunity to do the Project over again, I doubt the most meaningful outcomes would be any different.

I am humbled by the strength, commitment and positive attitude of the Aboriginal peoples that I have met and worked with through the Bridges and Foundations experience. I have seen an increase in mutual understanding and a greater willingness to participate in real partnerships among the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. I sincerely hope that the contributions and initiatives of the Bridges and Foundations: CURA will continue to build for the future.



Photo by Kirsten Anderson

# Research Projects

## Housing Design and Construction

### Community Housing and Design Options

**Report by:** The Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association

**Purpose:** To share affordable housing and community design information between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations.

On February 12, 2004, SRHBA held a community housing and design workshop at Wanuskewin Heritage Park attended by 39 people from the residential construction industry, the financial sector, community-based organizations and branches of government. The workshop brought together Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals to discuss housing and community design issues facing the Aboriginal population in and around Saskatoon.

The objective of the workshop was to develop sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that would result in affordable housing options and growth of culturally supportive communities. By building partnerships and encouraging open communication trust was and continues to be built.

Housing should be viewed as offering numerous benefits to families and communities. Home ownership encourages people to maintain their investment and have a sense of ownership within neighbourhoods, which can lead to a sense of community and increase stability in the lives of individuals and families.

The need for affordable student housing was also considered. There is a lack of student housing close to secondary and post-secondary institutions. A problem area was Joe Duquette High School, where many students have difficulty finding affordable rental housing, forcing them to travel long distances.

Partnerships of government and Aboriginal organizations and the residential construction industry are needed to develop effective affordable housing. Legislation, bylaws, building codes and zoning regulations make it difficult for certain renovations or lot redesigns. More flexible regulations may improve opportunity.

A large barrier to affordable housing is government red tape. Delayed timelines and administrative barriers have made the residential construction industry wary of projects with the provincial government as they offer little return on investment.

Another concern is serviced land availability. It is difficult to create affordable housing if there is no land available or it is so expensive it makes the units unaffordable. The partnerships created in this project allow for knowledge and technical expertise to be shared while creating a greater understanding of Aboriginal housing needs. The partnerships formed will continue to serve the residential construction industry in creating quality, affordable housing for Saskatoon.

**Affordable Housing and Home Ownership:  
Business Case Development for the Saskatoon Market**

**Report by:** Erin Foss, Research and Communications Assistant, Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association

**Purpose:** To examine the residential construction industry within the context of building sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants in the homebuilding industry.

*“Aboriginal people tend to live in housing that is cheaper and of poorer quality, but they are three times more likely than other Canadians to be unable to afford it.”*  
—Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Saskatchewan is not exempt from the housing crisis facing Aboriginals in Canada. Housing is often a measure of the overall well-being of a community and, if inadequate, can affect stability and self confidence. On the other hand, good housing does much more than provide shelter; it contributes to the revitalization of communities and families.

The time to develop housing programs has never been better. Low interest rates, more Aboriginal people entering the work force, rural-urban migration and growing partnerships can all contribute to affordable housing.

To understand what is demanded by the Saskatoon market, demographic research on the city and its labour force was conducted, with attention to the housing situation facing Saskatoon's Aboriginals.

The residential construction industry has experienced skilled labour shortages. This will worsen because a large number of construction professionals are near retirement. A demographic trend complementing this is the growth in the Aboriginal population.

The current focus is to build for high-end empty nesters in response to demand; however this ignores the affordable housing category. The Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association Business Initiatives Committee is working with the provincial government through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to increase the number of people who qualify for assistance under the Centenary Affordable Housing Program (CAHP).

As solutions are sought for ongoing housing concerns, Aboriginal communities must have input in the design. No one understands the challenges better than those who experience them first hand. The solution cannot be a top down approach. In order to move forward in a constructive manner, trust and partnerships must continue to be built.

## **Affordable Home Ownership for Aboriginal People in Saskatoon: Financial and Funding Options**

**Report by:** Valerie Sutton, Director of Research, Sun Ridge Residential Inc.

**Purpose:** To determine ways to make housing easier for Aboriginals to attain.

There is a widening gap between what many can pay for housing and what is available. Affording suitable housing is particularly problematic for single persons, lone parent families, Aboriginals and seniors.

This research looked at ways to close the gap between Aboriginals' capacity to purchase housing and the price of housing; it also looked at solutions that can quickly be implemented.

A partnership between the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association and the Sun Ridge Group was created to host a one-day roundtable discussion of financing and funding that will help Aboriginals become homeowners.

Five challenges faced by a young Aboriginal applying for a mortgage were listed:

1. Lack of knowledge about how the system works
2. Lifestyle issues of Aboriginals ignored by system
3. Rigid system targeted to the middle class
4. Establishing credit and dealing with Credit Bureau
5. Credit history heavily weighted and affects getting a mortgage for many years

The session made participants aware of the challenges faced by all first-time homebuyers and the specific challenges faced by Aboriginals, particularly those that grew up on reserves. It was clear that all of the organizations represented need to work together to make housing easier for Aboriginals to attain.

The following were recommended:

- Aggressively mentor and educate lenders, builders and developers, governments, and clients
- Lobby City of Saskatoon to provide land at appropriate prices and locations
- Create a housing fund and find funding
- Recommend changes to underwriting criteria and lobby for the changes; for example, income recognition
- Develop capacity to move ahead and work together



## **Aboriginal People and Housing: An Exploration of the Perceptions of Saskatoon Habitat for Humanity**

**Report by:** Katriona Hanna, Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To determine ways to make housing easier for Aboriginals to attain, specifically through Habitat for Humanity.

Saskatoon Habitat for Humanity (SHFH) has built or renovated 20 houses since 1991. Of the 20 families living in them, only three are Aboriginal, a number that does not reflect need. This study explored the perceptions Aboriginals, as well as representatives of other housing organizations and people within SHFH, have of it.

The four main objectives of this project were:

- Explore and describe perceptions Aboriginals have of SHFH
- Identify specific SHFH organization or program features that prevent Aboriginals from becoming home owners through it
- Identify specific SHFH organization or program features that encourage Aboriginals to become home owners through it
- Compare the SHFH organization or program features with those of other organizations providing low-income housing

Participants identified SHFH features they felt benefited Aboriginals: 500 hours sweat equity, employment requirement, thorough application process and community building. Several barriers were also identified, such as insufficient advertising by SHFH, image of SHFH as a non-Aboriginal organization, lack of Aboriginal representation on the SHFH board and the intimidating look of the SHFH homes.

The following recommendations came out of this project:

- Create Aboriginal representation on the board
- Hold meetings to provide information about SHFH in low-income areas and invite SHFH families to describe their experiences
- Increase advertising and use literacy friendly media, such as television and radio
- Explore different house designs that fit the neighbourhoods in which they are to be built
- Explore different methods for building, such as renovation
- Explore different types of housing, such as townhouses or multiunit dwellings
- Continue home ownership classes and introduce repair workshops
- Develop partnerships with other Aboriginal housing organizations, such as CUMFI, SaskNative Rentals, Cress Housing etc.

## Urban Aboriginal Community and Housing Design Charette

**Report by:** Kristina Johnson, Affordable New Home Development Foundation (ANHDF)

**Purpose:** To build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and to propose housing styles for specific communities

In response to the need for housing solutions in Saskatoon Aboriginal communities, an October 2004 design charette, facilitated by Aboriginal architect Ray Gosselin of the University of Regina, and ANHDF, explored different housing for identified lots.

ANHDF worked with the city to identify three sites. Background information included photographs, maps, amenities, community profiles, Aboriginal wants and needs, affordability criteria, management and financing, and the February 2004 Wanuskewin design workshop report.

Group 1 looked at the older Pleasant Hill site with 28 housing units (mostly rental) in poor condition. The group recommended the houses be replaced with a mixture of high-rise (with some commercial) and low-rise.

Challenges were financing, rental issues, educating homeowners, common space coordination, accommodating larger families, profitability for the owner, an unsafe area, accommodating current residents and expropriation of the park.

Group 2 had a 50-acre vacant and unzoned Sutherland parcel with commercial and retail opportunities. This group recommended the site be developed in stages. Block 1 would have single detached, semi-detached and townhouses. Block 2 would contain two multi-storey buildings for students and seniors, with commercial and institutional space on the lower level. Block 3 would be a mix of commercial, office and institutional. Block 4 would contain two 36-unit apartment blocks, with childcare space and a multi-unit building for student housing. There would be a cultural circle in front of the buildings.

Some challenges were land availability, house prices and NIMBY (Not In My Backyard).

Group 3 had the older Westmount residential site, being rezoned to RM3. There is a voluntary commitment to limit the number of units to 12. Because it is close to a technical college, it should be considered for student housing. The recommended solution was three four-unit residences, a row house on the north side, a fourplex in the middle and a fourplex on the south side.

The main challenge would be NIMBY: regardless of how good the project looked, there would be a problem with accepting rental and multi-units in the neighbourhood.

For the future it was suggested:

- Another design charette be held by the Saskatoon Tribal Council for Aboriginal participation
- Design proposals be presented to the communities to get feedback and address NIMBY
- Lenders should be involved in financial discussions
- The City of Saskatoon needs to be involved to address zoning and development
- Owners of the sites need to be involved

## **The *Building Skills, Building Homes* Project: A Community Education Study in Alternative Lifestyle Practices Through Straw Bale Construction**

**Report by:** Carol Vandale, graduate student, Department of Educational Foundations

**Purpose:** To build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and to examine an example of alternative house building methods.

Proponents of affordable housing are looking at innovative options for low-income people. The *Building Skills, Building Homes* project was such a venture.

The author coordinated this pilot project, which trained 11 young, predominantly Aboriginal women in natural building methods by erecting two straw bale structures. The unemployed women were selected by Marcia Klein, program leader of the Brightwater Science and Environment Program for the Saskatoon Public School Division, staff from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and the author. As well as basic carpentry, the women were trained in yurts, vaults and straw bale structures.

These buildings incorporated unique materials such as straw bale, mud plaster and recycled lumber. Participants also learned about solar power, water and waste management, co-operative land ownership and other alternative practices.

The builders learned more than construction skills. They learned why these skills were important to the design and why the design was chosen. Where a building was placed governed how it was going to access, store, and release energy. What we became aware of was that although there are energy-efficient technologies, there is not the will to change the way we harness energy.

Straw bale is a building option that addresses energy savings and environmental benefits. Simply put, it is another form of insulation. Straw bale walls have an insulation rating of between 43 and 70 R-value, compared to wood-frame walls with batting infill at 10 to 15 R-value. Bales also have structural significance and can offer a load-bearing component as well.

Straw bale design was chosen for this project because bales are readily available, require little preparation and are faster to erect than other methods, such as stackwall-cordwood, rammed earth or adobe. The problem is that in drought years, as the Prairies have seen recently, straw bales are in short supply and can cost a little more. And it is necessary to find a farmer who still bales straw in small rectangular cubes, rather than large round bales.

Another factor is the total cost of a building, which can range from \$10 to \$200 a square foot. Straw bale houses are perceived as less expensive, and can be. The author discusses the effect which choice of building material may have on a building's total cost. As one of the teacher-builders on the project said, "Most of the cost of any building is in the foundation and the roof."

# Partnerships

## Partnerships in Urban Housing Projects

**Report by:** Cathy Nilson, graduate student in Political Studies, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To explore the development of partnerships between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Public partnerships with private interests have succeeded in solving various problems over the last two decades. Among such partnerships are those between Aboriginal governments and their federal, provincial and municipal counterparts.

The importance of these partnerships is underscored by a Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada document, which states that “partnerships are crucial tools in Aboriginal economic development.” They are important in Saskatchewan, where the number exceeds those in the rest of Canada. Many are developed to address grim socio-economic realities in Aboriginal communities. Inadequate housing is one such reality, which is reflected in a higher incidence of poverty and marginalization.

This report provides a framework for an urban Aboriginal housing partnership. It borrows from the author’s M.A. thesis on the gaming partnership between the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Province of Saskatchewan. Those partners sought to enhance socio-economic opportunities for Aboriginals by incorporating a regulated approach to gaming on and off reserves. The lessons can be applied to housing partnerships.

An urban housing partnership requires the following:

1. A strong municipal, provincial and federal social housing policy
2. Stable funding for sustainability
3. Experienced management
4. Community leaders to identify needs and encourage participation
5. Inclusive approaches that value and use community input

This report represents only one perspective. As Aboriginal research continues a unique Aboriginal perspective may emerge. While organization of partnerships is important, there is also a need to understand what approach will enhance local capacity building and citizen participation, which are critical to success.

## **Summary and Analysis of Bridges and Foundations: CURA**

**Report by:** Jacqueline Thomarat, Political Studies Career Intern, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To evaluate the partnerships formed during the Bridges and Foundations: CURA Project.

This is an analysis of the inner workings of the Bridges and Foundations CURA Project, a research project on housing affordability for Aboriginals in Saskatoon. Over five months, information was collected on the general objectives and specific activities of the project. It was found that the mission, mandate and objectives were fulfilled.

The Bridges and Foundations CURA Project was designed to benefit working relations between the community and educational institutions, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations.

The project produced valuable research on housing affordability for Aboriginals and fulfilled its mission to create resources for implementing affordable housing. It also created a desire among the community and Aboriginal members to continue working together. There was important change in the administrative cultures of the partners.

The vision of the project was to address the problems that have prohibited housing affordability for Aboriginals in Saskatoon.

Interested organizations came together to research programs and policies that might meet housing needs and prevent discrimination toward Aboriginals. Housing businesses had been aware that adequate affordable housing was not available in Saskatoon. However, there were no Aboriginals present at meetings which addressed the issue. Similarly, there were no representatives from the housing industry at the Aboriginal meetings on affordable housing.

In response, three groups came together to find solutions: the University of Saskatchewan, the business sector, and Aboriginal organizations. This inclusive community and university partnership was the basis for the Bridges and Foundations CURA Project. Cross-cultural partnerships are important for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and for developing culturally supportive communities.

Engaging Aboriginals in the project was a central objective and a better understanding of the similarities and differences between partners was the result. Public acceptance of a strategy can influence its outcome. This was particularly important for Aboriginal communities, whose needs are unique. Aboriginal participation and acceptance were essential. Cultural sensitivity and trust building were just some of the components in building cross-cultural partnerships.

**The Creation and Operation of Residential Urban Reserves in Canada:  
Issues and Options for Saskatchewan First Nations  
for Providing Adequate and Affordable Housing**

**Report by:** Dr. Joseph Garcea, Department of Political Studies, University of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To explore the creation of residential urban reserves, particularly in Saskatoon, as a means of providing quality affordable housing for Aboriginal people.

This report addresses six questions:

1. What are the needs of Aboriginals in Saskatoon for affordable and adequate housing?
2. How are existing residential urban reserves shaped?
3. Are residential urban reserves an option for supplying adequate and affordable housing for Aboriginals?
4. What are the challenges and choices facing First Nations, looking at residential urban reserves in Saskatoon?
5. What are the major processes for creating residential urban reserves?
6. What must First Nations do to insure they are strategically positioned to create urban reserves designed to provide adequate and affordable housing?

A large number of Aboriginal people in Saskatoon have housing and employment needs; they live in neighbourhoods in which community services, and health, safety and social cohesion need development; they also need economic and political development. Unless corrected those problems are likely to increase as the Aboriginal population grows.

Although there are many similarities among residential urban reserves, there are considerable differences in their geographic, demographic and functional arrangements, as well as in the shape of their subdivisions, landholdings, housing stock, and relations between band and municipal councils.

The creation of urban reserves is one way of providing affordable and adequate housing, but not the only means. However in addition to solving housing needs, they provide other benefits, both to band members and band councils. Urban reserves offer potentially valuable and viable options for providing housing in culturally appropriate settings for Aboriginal residents. But they are not the only option. And while they are potentially valuable, there are many contingencies that have to be dealt with to ensure their success.

In addition to practical problems, urban reserves can create political ones. Even if there is consensus on goals, there is not likely to be on means. Band councils, band members, other potential stakeholders and members of the public may question the value of urban reserves. Government stakeholders should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of fragmenting governance, planning and development systems in an urban region.

The central goal in creating any reserve is healthy and safe communities for those who live in and near them. It is in no one's interest to simply shift problems from one part of an urban community to another.

# Community Development

## Community Voices Within Saskatoon's Inner-City Neighbourhoods: Capacity and Needs Assessment

**Report by:** Elizabeth Burk and SaskNative Rentals

**Purpose:** To identify gaps, barriers, fragmentation and duplication of services in the community as they apply to Aboriginal housing capacity and needs.

More specifically the objectives of this research were to:

- Identify the emerging issues, concerns and strengths of community members
- Assess the level of knowledge and frequency of use of existing agencies and organizations by community members
- Determine reasons preventing citizens from using local services and organizations
- Move research into action

An assessment of the needs of Saskatoon's five core neighbourhoods, Pleasant Hill, King George, Riversdale, Westmount, and Caswell Hill, was conducted, which produced a list of all agency and service delivery providers. The research team also determined the needs and perspectives of 1,000 inner-city residents through a survey conducted by a research team consisting of local residents.

Further analysis came from focus groups. The result was a profile of residents based on population, income, employment, education, housing, health and demand for emergency relief. An index of socio-economic disadvantage was also created.

Data compared Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives on quality, affordability, need and satisfaction towards housing and the community.

Community members were concerned with personal and community safety. None of the top issues identified addressed health or crisis needs. Housing issues focused on financial constraints and lack of safe and affordable rental units or homes to purchase.

This study revealed that the majority of those surveyed were not fully aware of the existing agencies, organizations and service providers in the community. This is likely the main barrier to their using these services. They repeatedly stressed to the research team that their voice was not being heard or respected.

The recommendations for this capacity and needs assessment, as prioritized by the community, fell into seven themes:

1. Strengthening and supporting children and families
2. Strengthening and supporting youth
3. Supporting Elders and seniors for their guidance
4. Strengthening multiculturalism and diversity
5. Strengthening safety and crime prevention
6. Building collaborative, community partnerships
7. Developing housing strategies (home renovation, bylaw education, tenant rights and responsibilities, home ownership strategies)

## **Vibrant Groups’’: Core Neighbourhood Development Council**

**Report by:** Charlie Clark, Strategic Planning Coordinator, Core Neighbourhood Development Council (CNDC)

**Purpose:** To implement strategies to support Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods’ six priorities.

The CNDC’s goal is to create opportunities for collaboration and networking among people and groups dealing with Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods. CNDC represents community-based organizations and representatives of government and business who work with the community to identify priorities and help create programs that respond to them. The idea for the CNDC came from Quint Development Corporation in 2001.

CNDC members agree the work in developing a community-led vision and strategic plan for the core neighbourhoods has been a success. In addition relationship building and networking have been critical for raising awareness and building a community of colleagues.

The challenges now are determining the best path from consultation to action, and how to create partnerships to do the work. Experience indicates this work is more difficult than anticipated. At the same time, given the increasing amount of activity and programming in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods, there are opportunities to build on what is going on.

The priorities addressed in the core neighbourhoods were:

1. A mix of safe, affordable rental housing
2. Affordable homes for low and moderate income residents
3. Access to quality food at fair prices
4. Job training, career development and job placement support tailored to individual needs
5. Cooperation among residents, businesses, community organizations and governments to maintain safe and secure neighbourhoods
6. Quality programs, activities and opportunities for young people

This report covers a period in which we were preparing the ground to create measurable outcomes in terms of interventions in the community. The outcomes from this period are process outcomes. We created an organizational framework, principles, vision and mandate. We agreed on working groups and began gathering people for these groups. We built awareness about the CNDC with a variety of potential partners: the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Westside Community Clinic, Community Associations, One Arrow First Nation, the City of Saskatoon, the Regional Intersectoral Committee, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Saskatoon Food Coalition and others.

A collaborative initiative like this relies on building trust and partnership between groups as a precursor to delivery. That was the focus of this period. We also created an evaluation working group to develop a method for evaluating the results of the CNDC interventions.



## **Metis Elders Circle Housing Research Project**

**Report by:** Chenew Holdings Inc.

**Purpose:** To determine the housing needs of Metis Elders.

There is little information on the housing needs of Metis Elders. Because the focus is on the growing young Aboriginal population, the housing needs of Aboriginal Elders are overlooked.

This report examines the issue through the voices of the Metis Elders and demonstrates their needs are not being met. Metis Elders are not homogeneous; they fall into four categories: 1. those who live alone, 2. those who live with a spouse, 3. those who live with others, 4. those who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren. These groups subdivide on the basis of the health of the individual or spouse and who else lives in the household. The conditions of Metis Elders can change quickly and this can have an immediate effect on their housing.

For Saskatoon Metis Elders housing is more than shelter: it is a place to share with family and friends, bring up children, carry on traditional activities, connect with and be a part of nature, and a place to pray.

Researchers determined that housing for Metis Elders must satisfy the following:

- It must be culturally sensitive
- It must be on one level
- Pet regulations should be waived for Elders living alone
- Housing authorities should be sensitive to medical needs when renting to Metis Elders
- Builders should get advice from organizations who understand the special needs of people with various chronic conditions
- Alert alarms should be available to all Elders, particularly those living alone
- A holistic approach to Metis Elder housing requires collaboration of housing authorities with health personnel, social services, security services, services for the disabled, etc.
- The needs of grandparents caring full time for grandchildren must be considered
- To enhance their quality of life Metis Elders must know about support services

Metis Elders housing is not just about shelter but their pursuit of independence in a culturally appropriate way. It is essential that their contribution to this report translate into respectful housing.

During this project interest was expressed in developing a Metis Elder housing project that captures the best practices discussed in the report. Despite the recent development of bridging between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and high levels of interest, there is a danger that the groundwork prepared could be wasted.

To address the concerns and build upon the networking and linkages in place, there must be ongoing dialogue that can result in respectful, sustainable, affordable housing for Metis Elders in Saskatoon.

## **Patterns and Influences of Home Ownership and Renting in Pleasant Hill**

**Report by:** Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

**Purpose:** To examine the patterns and influences of home ownership in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood of Saskatoon.

“Ask us, don’t tell us!” This came from a participant in the resident focus group. Tired of researchers coming to tell them how to “fix their community,” Pleasant Hill residents told us that they have the solutions to the problems.

Pleasant Hill is rich in diversity – in culture, employment, tenancy and commitment to community. Some residents have lived in their homes more than 50 fifty years, some mere months. Some have little education, others post-secondary credentials. Some are employed, some not.

The research revealed a desire to rebuild a stable community with adequate and affordable shelter, a clean environment, access to services and freedom from crime.

A safety problem was evident to researchers who daily observed criminal activity, unsupervised children, children not in school, people afraid to walk out. Fear and distrust paint a picture of residents as suspects or potential victims. Children, youth and women are approached by “johns”. Seniors walking to the bus fear being robbed. Children and youth are victims or perpetrators of crime. Needles and condoms are found in schoolgrounds and parks.

We found residents who in spite of these daily activities brought forth solutions. We heard how home ownership is needed, supported and encouraged. We heard how rent controls should be examined to allow for adequate and affordable housing. This project sought to understand the patterns of home ownership and renting, location and type of housing, and home maintenance and repair. The research focused on low-density housing, although there was some overcrowding.

There was a difference between homeowners and renters regarding maintenance and repair. Renters were more likely to take training. Homeowners had access to people with skills or had experience and would do the work themselves. Residents saw home ownership as a way to stabilize their neighbourhood. We heard how utility bills have forced people from their homes while taxes were seen as unreasonable considering the value of property compared to other neighbourhoods.

Most renters were comfortable with asking their landlords to fix their homes. We found that renters and homeowners who have been living in the neighbourhood for some time, wanted to remain in their neighbourhood and their current home. The majority of renters wanted to own their own place and would buy in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood.

Residents in the community offered insights and recommendations for their community. As experts of their community, their voices and their experiences comprise the bulk of the content of this report. Their commitment to their community, their resilience in the face of fear and crime, and their strength were humbling for the research team.

## **Family Friendly Housing Initiative**

**Report by:** Quint Development Corporation

**Purpose:** To examine housing rental in core neighbourhoods and how the Family Friendly Housing Initiative (FFHI) can assist a community.

Quint Development Corporation is a Community Economic Development (CED) non-profit organization in Saskatoon's core. Quint's philosophy is to use affordable housing for broader economic and social development. In the past its focus was home ownership, but recently it began to look at rental housing. This report focuses on the issues surrounding renting in the core neighbourhoods and how FFHI can help.

Research in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods shows at least half of the property is rental. Renters play a key part in these communities. They are the majority, yet there are serious issues around affordability, safety and cleanliness. There are also complex issues around relations between tenants, landlords, property managers and others in the community. These issues encompass economic factors, group dynamics and government social programs. All these make it difficult to take on rental housing as a single issue. It needs a multilateral tactic, which is the basis of FFHI.

Quint chose to concentrate FFHI on the Pleasant Hill area and the Pleasant Hill Community Association (PHCA) requested that FFHI principles be adapted there. It has the highest ratio of rental properties of all five core neighbourhoods: 1996 census data showed the percentage of rental property to be 76.1%. Average earnings were less than \$20,000 a year (compared to \$49,000 for the entire city). Average rent was \$428, only \$32 less than the Saskatoon average. The properties were considerably older and difficult for landlords to maintain.

FFHI had a positive outcome for Pleasant Hill because of the apartment building Quint purchased as a pilot project. This project will test whether FFHI principles are adaptable for Pleasant Hill and whether they make a difference in rental housing. It will evaluate what can be achieved and identify what remains to be done in rental housing.

The building's structure contributes to a family friendly environment, meeting requirements of safety, health and affordability, although rent is not subsidized. It is \$420 a month for basement suites and \$430 for suites with balconies. It contains a private subsidized daycare and a common room for people to meet and hold workshops. It will also employ a community support worker to ensure a close link between the landlord (Quint) and the tenants. This person will help tenants find community resources and establish workshops. There will also be an office for tenants with computer, internet and a common phone.

Extensive renovations were made before its opening: new plumbing, flooring, carpeting, doors, paint, countertops and lighting are just part of the list. The structure exemplifies what Quint envisions for all people, a safe, clean place.

The apartment has made a significant difference in people's lives and in the community. It is an example of how housing can improve for people who rent. The pilot project may be the most convincing and effective part of the FFHI endeavour.

## **Urban First Nations Residential Development Manual**

**Report by:** Jess Chhokar with Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (Housing Department)

**Purpose:** To create a manual for First Nations residents anticipating buying a home in the city.

This report tells about housing investment opportunities in Saskatoon and how First Nations residents might benefit from them. It contains information on available funding, partners who can help, financing options and resources needed.

Housing investment in Saskatoon is relatively safe and makes economic sense. The historic average yearly growth in property values is four per cent.

Investment in Saskatoon housing is critical to sheltering its increasing Aboriginal population. During the last decade there has been an influx to urban centres and more than 60 per cent now live off reserve. In addition the Aboriginal population is booming with more than half under 20.

The housing opportunities explained in this report serve three main groups:

1. Those with low to moderate income
2. Those on social assistance or with low income
3. Students

Homeownership offers stability, pride in ownership and equity growth. A home ownership program is worth considering. There are funding, leveraging and partnership opportunities available.

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has created a home ownership option in the Centenary Affordable Housing Program (CAHP) to assist sponsors of low and moderate-income families. The 2001 census indicates average income for Aboriginal households is \$26,900, making many eligible for a forgivable CAHP loan.

There are many barriers to home ownership, such as bad credit history, cost of homes and lack of income. To overcome them several suggestions are offered in this report:

- A land trust
- A home ownership program emphasizing debt management and financial planning
- Down payment assistance
- A homeowners' co-operative
- A rent-to-own program

For those not ready for homeownership, bands and communities might consider investing in a rental complex. According to the 2001 census two thirds of Aboriginals in Saskatoon rent. A rental complex is eligible for funding from the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation through CAHP.

## **Training and Apprenticeships**

### **Aboriginal Involvement With Apprenticeship in Residential Construction in Saskatoon**

**Report by:** Valerie Sutton, Director of Research, Sun Ridge Residential Inc.

**Purpose:** To determine the value of apprenticeships for Aboriginals in residential construction.

Aboriginal apprenticeships in residential construction and renovation address two problems in the Aboriginal community: housing and employment.

The objectives of this study were:

- To determine the number of Aboriginal people working in residential construction in Saskatoon
- To determine the number of Aboriginal people enrolled in apprenticeship programs in residential construction in Saskatoon
- To determine how many Aboriginal people are interested in enrolling in an apprenticeship program in the residential construction industry

Out of 440 residential construction companies in Saskatoon, 290 completed a survey. Of the 258 companies that had employees (32 were sole proprietorships), 28 per cent employed Aboriginals. Roofing and concrete contractors had the highest percentage of Aboriginals.

The majority (63 per cent) of Aboriginal employees had worked for three years or less; 42 per cent were classified as labourers, an occupation with high turnover.

Only 15 workers were enrolled in an apprenticeship program, even though 25 per cent of the respondents said they were willing to take on new apprentices.

It appears that residential construction companies in Saskatoon have a positive attitude towards hiring Aboriginals. In addition there are many opportunities to apprentice in a trade.

It is recommended that steps be taken to encourage Aboriginals to enroll in apprenticeship programs.

Aboriginal organizations and schools need to be informed of the opportunities in residential construction and encouraged to provide information on apprenticeship, including the new subtrades. Positive aspects of apprenticeship need to be stressed, such as higher wages, job stability and long-term career prospects. Women also need to be informed.

A list of companies willing to take on new apprentices needs to be distributed to schools and organizations, such as Construction Careers Saskatoon; schools and Aboriginal organizations need to act as liaisons between potential apprentices and employers.

## **Management and Coordination of Apprenticeship Training Opportunities for Aboriginal Students in Residential Construction**

**Report by:** Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA)

**Purpose:** To support through bursaries Aboriginals committed to working in apprenticeship programs in the residential construction industry.

Recruiting candidates for the Bridges and Foundations apprenticeship bursary has been both challenging and rewarding. The candidates themselves face both a complicated apprenticeship process and barriers to employment.

SRHBA believes in recruiting the best candidates. It is in the best interest of the construction industry, the applicants and this project to ensure the most deserving are chosen. However, selection has been difficult within the given timeframe. Obstacles encountered can be found in this report.

Thus far SRHBA has experienced a 55 per cent success rate, the percentage of applicants it feels will benefit from a bursary. It is difficult to find candidates who strike a balance between a commitment to residential construction and a need for funding.

Often applicants have an unrealistic understanding of what is involved in achieving journeyman status. Several candidates did not realize they will have to go to Prince Albert or Moose Jaw to attain Level 3 and 4 training. Another misunderstanding is the bursary itself. Some candidates thought they were applying for a position with the SRHBA, although it is explicitly stated on the application form that recruitment is for a bursary or scholarship, not a job opening.

SRHBA feels current recruitment sources have been exhausted. Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Construction Careers Saskatoon and Métis Employment and Training of Saskatchewan have given us all of their candidates.

Important to this project were relationships with a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. These partners are helping SRHBA identify Aboriginal students enrolled or planning to enrol in residential construction apprenticeship programs.

Partnerships have been made with:

- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
- Construction Careers Saskatoon
- Employment and Training of Saskatchewan
- Saskatoon Tribal Council and the Employers Circle
- Career and Employment Services
- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation
- Saskatoon Catholic Schools
- Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

## **Apprenticeship Consultations**

**Report by:** Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA)

**Purpose:** To increase Aboriginal involvement and recognition in the residential construction industry.

The industry faces shortages of skilled labour. The issue is not the number of applicants but their training. New technology, building systems and materials demand new skills from those attempting to enter the industry.

This situation will worsen because a large number of trades and construction professionals are nearing retirement. Accompanying this is the growth in the Aboriginal population. As well there is a shortage of entrepreneurs to take over the businesses that make up the construction industry. Statistics Canada says 80 per cent of organizations in Canada's residential construction industry have four employees or fewer and in most cases the owners are within 10 years of retirement age.

To achieve the goals of this project the SRHBA developed partnerships with various organizations to build bridges and eliminate barriers to Aboriginal involvement in the industry.

A strategy was to educate Aboriginal people and employers in the industry about the benefits of working together. This involved talking to youth, parents, educators and career counsellors. Attention was also paid to adults thinking of new careers.

Through these efforts we were able to reach people who may not have considered a career in residential construction, either because of lack of information or a negative perception of the industry. Many believe, incorrectly, that residential construction does not provide steady employment.

The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission has approved the designation of the carpentry subtrade of framer. Other subtrades for carpentry – concrete former, and interior and exterior finisher – were referred to the pilot project phase. This initiative is designed to attract more young people to the industry and facilitate their entry into the trades within one year.

New perceptions and more knowledge regarding careers in residential construction will help provide employment for Aboriginals in Saskatoon and ensure the industry has skilled labour to satisfy housing demand.

Recommendations:

- Support and mentorship from the industry in schools and on jobsites
- Increased availability of training in the province
- Scholarships and business development programs
- Sharing success stories in Aboriginal communities
- Early intervention and education.

# Student Housing

## Housing Needs of First Nations University of Canada Students

**Report by:** Shelley Thomas Prokop and Lorraine MacDonald, School of Indian Social Work, First Nations University of Canada

**Purpose:** To determine the childcare and housing needs of Aboriginal students at the Saskatoon Campus of the First Nations University of Canada.

First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) allows Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to learn in a traditional atmosphere. Over the years students have requested childcare and affordable housing. These are an increasing priority as the campus population grows and students continue to relocate from rural communities. Research for this report revealed racism and poverty were related issues.

The childcare research showed:

- Students had difficulty establishing worry-free childcare throughout the city
- Students experienced stress getting their children to and from childcare, especially when it is far from home and university
- Students worried about being unable to give full effort to study because childcare distracted them
- Students said it would be most effective and stress free if they could access childcare close to school

Childcare recommendations:

- FNUC should establish a childcare facility for students
- It should be in a prefabricated building because it is least costly and most efficient
- FNUC should increase awareness of available childcare to students

The housing research showed:

- Students are on fixed incomes (more than 90%) and need more money for housing
- Students need housing that meets the needs of their families
- Education inspired most students (69%) to move to Saskatoon
- Although 40% of students live on less than \$1,000 a month, 43% pay \$501-\$750 in rent
- FNUC needs relationships with agencies providing subsidized student housing
- A majority of students live in Saskatoon's west end
- Students want housing developed close to FNUC
- Households may be single, married, with children, and blended and extended families
- Students need safe and secure housing close to grocery stores and schools
- Suitable and affordable housing will lead to more academic success
- Students want to be involved in developing housing initiatives

The housing recommendations answered the research findings on this subject.



## Aboriginal Post-Secondary Student Housing

**Report by:** Brenda Wallace, Executive Director, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, with Brenda Maire and Allison Lachance, Research Interns

**Purpose:** To build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and to determine the housing needs of Aboriginal students along with an Aboriginal student housing strategy.

The talking circles were an important part of the research for this assessment (see summary of Student Housing Talking Circles). There were also 215 surveys collected from the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (Kelsey Campus).

The surveys showed that 64.7 per cent of respondents had dependents and that the largest constituency of Aboriginal students is older, not just out of high school. Also, the Aboriginal post-secondary population is growing at the University of Saskatchewan and SIAST, the two largest institutions, while it is levelling off at SIIT, Dumont Technical Institute, Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) and Native Access to Nursing. It is expected to be at least 3,500 for the near future.

Although bachelor units and one-bedroom apartments are affordable, most students, because they have families, need larger accommodation. Half of the respondents are paying more than \$500 a month; 14 per cent pay more than \$700 a month and 14 per cent pay less than \$300, an amount actually affordable to students.

Housing choices were guided by the following:

- Affordable 45%
- Close to school 39%
- Close to bus route 39%
- Close to shopping 25%
- Close to services for children 19%
- Availability 7%
- Nice neighbourhood 7%
- Close to family or friends 4%
- Other 4%

For the 35.3% of students who did not have dependents, housing choices were guided by different factors. Due to housing costs, many of these students are in shared accommodation.

On average participants had completed 22 months of post-secondary education and faced an average of 23 months until completion, so they had a strong grasp of the housing challenges which Aboriginal students experience.

Almost three quarters of Aboriginal students stated they had or were currently having housing issues. The three most prevalent were: rent too high (65%), heat or electricity too expensive (45%) and housing unsuitable (too small) (40%).

## **Metis Student Housing Research Project**

**Report by:** Broxbourne International

**Purpose:** To examine housing needs and problems of Metis university and technology students in Saskatoon.

As well as describing their realities and hopes, the Metis students consulted on this project provided suggestions on how to make housing development more effective. While Aboriginal student housing has been receiving attention, little information has been collected on Metis housing.

This project took into account the unique and constitutionally protected Metis traditions, practices and customs. The primary student groups surveyed were those attending the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), Dumont Technical Institute (DTI) and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology – Kelsey Campus (SIASST).

The research findings demonstrate that the housing needs of Metis students are not being met. Creating inclusive and respectful housing policies requires recognition that Metis students are not a homogeneous group and that a variety of options is needed.

Metis students indicated overwhelmingly they want to participate in the development of housing strategies for them. This includes the review and amending of existing policies. They felt that all levels of housing authority must be flexible to accommodate students' needs and their school terms.

It was suggested that housing authorities take the initiative and provide information on housing availability; they should also go to Metis educational institutions to help students with housing applications.

Students strongly supported the idea of a Metis Village to provide housing and community to Metis trying to change their lives. For Metis students, housing is more than shelter; it is a place to study, to raise children, to practise their culture.

The research team recommends the following:

- The implementation of a housing strategy that is culturally appropriate and representative of Metis students' diversity
- The involvement of Metis students at every stage of development of a housing strategy and its implementation
- The improvement of existing housing strategies to better meet Metis students' needs
- The establishment of a communications strategy for partnerships among Metis and non-Aboriginals involved in housing
- The development of protocols to be used for housing initiatives for Metis students
- The establishment of greater contact between educational institutions, agencies and governments delivering housing to Metis, and the appointment of a Metis housing officer for each educational institution

## Social Problems

### **Post-incarceration Experiences: Listening to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Ex-prisoners**

**Report by:** Deborah Drake, Graduate Student in Sociology, University of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To determine the challenges faced by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal former prisoners integrating into society

This research investigates and documents the nature of the challenges faced by men upon their release from federal incarceration in the Province of Saskatchewan. Due to the high number of Aboriginal people incarcerated in Saskatchewan, this research necessarily investigates the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ex-prisoners. A qualitative approach is employed in order to understand post-incarceration from the perspectives of those who have experienced what it is like to return to the community after prison and those who work with men making this transition.

This thesis describes Parole Board hearings, the difficulties related to integrating into society as perceived by ex-prisoners, and the role of the service providers and agencies in Saskatoon that assist former inmates. It is shown that there are certain difficulties common among ex-prisoners, such as finding employment and housing and accessing appropriate support resources. The particular difficulties of Aboriginal ex-prisoners are highlighted, revealing that the difficulties experience by all ex-prisoners appear to be amplified for Aboriginal ex-prisoners. Racism and the overall disadvantaged position of Aboriginal peopled in Canada are identified as significant barriers to Aboriginal ex-prisoners attempting to integrate into the community.

### **Design of Affordable Housing for Stressed Families**

**Report by:** Nancy McKinnon, Environmental Architect

**Purpose:** To identify a set of design requirements that will guarantee a high level of accessibility, energy efficiency and flexibility, while maintaining a low overall cost of construction.

A stressed family is defined as any family coping with poverty, living with functional limitations due to a disability or aging, or coping with the demands of caring for children with only one caregiver. In the Aboriginal community many of these factors can be found in the same family.

This project reviewed relevant work and research, and built models to identify design requirements that will guarantee accessibility, energy efficiency and flexibility, while maintaining low overall construction cost.

## **Aboriginal Women Fleeing Violence in Saskatoon: “Looking for a Safe Place for My Family”**

**Report by:** Shelley Thomas Prokop and Joan Sanderson, School of Indian Social Work, First Nations University of Canada

**Purpose:** To determine the capacity of Saskatoon to meet the needs of Aboriginal women fleeing violence and the shelter needs of those women.

This report is based on the views of 25 Aboriginal women and two non-Aboriginal women who have had to flee violence in Saskatoon, 14 organizations that work with Aboriginal women fleeing violence, and three Elders.

We found limited research on Saskatoon’s capacity to house Aboriginal women fleeing violence, but we were able to find many people interested in discussing that capacity and components of a shelter for them.

The women and agencies taking part in this research support a shelter that meets the specific needs of Aboriginal women. Although there are specific services in Saskatoon for Aboriginal women, many are not able to access the shelters because they are full, they are not meeting their needs or are not large enough to accommodate their families. There was also considerable support for an Aboriginal men’s shelter that uses a holistic approach.

How should the shelter look? The responses suggested an inclusive and harmonious structure that nurtures growth and privacy, with large rooms to accommodate families, a visitors’ space and a prayer room where women can have quiet time or smudge.

Researchers also found there were long waiting periods, in most instances, to get into shelters, that there is a need for stays beyond 30 days and that there was a lack of programs reflecting the needs of Aboriginal women and their families.

These are some of the recommendations from people who participated in this project:

- Develop shelters with input from Aboriginal community
- Disseminate research results
- Continually support women fleeing violence and organizations servicing them
- Create shelters for different needs: crisis, transition and long-term
- Create programs that reflect needs of women and families
- Avoid discriminating against women without money
- Develop children’s programs
- Offer services consistent with First Nation’s cultural principles and traditions
- Focus on family healing, specifically for men

## **Home in the City: Urban Aboriginal Youths' Sense of Belonging in Saskatoon**

**Report by:** Gail MacKay, Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To determine what contributes to a sense of belonging in the minds of urban Aboriginal youth.

This project solicited urban Aboriginal youths' thoughts on a space worthy of being called home, and this report expresses the researcher's interpretations of what the youths said on this topic. The researcher discovered that their sense of belonging focused more on the social sphere than on the physical sphere.

There were 16 participants in the focus groups, between 18 and 27, nine of them men. Education ranged from grade eight to current university attendance as undergraduates. Tobacco use in the past year was reported by 15 of the participants, alcohol by 13 and drugs by 10.

Identity is the sense of oneself as an individual and as a member of a collective. Factors that contribute to a sense of self as an individual may be the same as or separate from the factors that contribute to a sense of oneself as a member of a collective.

In talking about their sense of belonging, participants identified their extended families, reserve communities, friends and their social network in the city. Their sense was not about a physical place of birth.

Each generation of Aboriginal youth who live in a city must come to terms with it. They must gain an intimate understanding of who they are as individuals and the recognition of a community to affirm their belonging. That sense of belonging is vulnerable to influences that can undermine their sense of identity or self-worth. The majority of Saskatoon Aboriginal youth face obstacles to gain equal social and economic equality with non-Aboriginals.

These research findings can contribute to urban planning initiatives to build sustainable relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and to inform the design of culturally supportive communities.

The place of youth in the city need not be peripheral and transitional but rather central and permanent.

## **HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan: Colonization, Marginalization and Recovery**

**Report by:** Carol Romanow, graduate student, Department of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To examine the health and quality of life of urban Aboriginal women living with HIV/AIDS.

Most of the women surveyed for this dissertation supported themselves and their children through prostitution. Many had not completed high school, had been imprisoned at least once, had no permanent address, had abused alcohol or drugs, had one or more sexually transmitted disease, had HIV/AIDS or hepatitis C, and had been sexually, physically or emotionally abused.

Women constitute the majority of Saskatchewan's urban Aboriginal population. They also assume much of the responsibility for the welfare of other Aboriginals in urban communities. However, the evidence shows that urban service delivery groups are not meeting their needs even though the women's health and well-being depend on this service.

The increasing number of young Saskatchewan Aboriginal women living with HIV/AIDS or hepatitis C demands not only better prevention programs, but strategies for living with the infections. The infection rates for HIV/AIDS among Saskatchewan Aboriginal women are rising while they are levelling off for the non-Aboriginal population. There are social and economic reasons, such as low education and unstable housing.

HIV/AIDS is a new problem for Aboriginals. At the beginning of the AIDS crisis low levels of detected HIV made many believe they had been spared. Meanwhile, they were preoccupied with greater health and social problems, such as youth suicide, violence and solvent abuse. Moreover there are still many Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan who think AIDS is a disease that cannot affect them.

Some think it is only a gay disease, a city disease that cannot follow people to the rural community or a white man's disease. Meanwhile HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C are growing in the Aboriginal community because of low condom use, low self-esteem, intravenous drugs, sexual abuse and prostitution.

Dealing with HIV/AIDS among Saskatchewan's Aboriginals is not easy. While creating awareness in Canadian society has been successful, such initiatives have not focused on the specific needs of the Aboriginal community in terms of effective care and support.

The quality of life of Saskatchewan Aboriginal women is affected by socioeconomic status and environment. This research shows that for the most part they live in poverty and constitute a large segment of Saskatoon's low-income families.

Poverty can affect attitudes to taking risk. When so much energy is spent on daily survival it is easy to ignore a problem that may not materialize for 10 years.

## **An Analysis of Race Relations in Saskatoon: The Contributions of the Housing Sector**

**Report by:** Cara Spence, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To examine how housing specifically relates to the Aboriginal community and the perpetuation of racial inequalities.

Race is a distinguishable feature of Saskatoon. The city serves one of the largest populations of Aboriginals in Canada and has one of the largest percentages of Aboriginals at or below the poverty level. Much of this population is concentrated within deteriorating neighbourhoods, while development continues elsewhere.

These neighbourhoods contain housing in severe decay, hungry children with poor school achievement, and crime. They are segregated not just by economics, but by race. Before there can be an understanding of segregation, there must be some understanding of how serious it is, what causes it and what its effects are. This report explores the severe educational, employment, economic, criminal and other consequences of segregation and inequality.

While revitalization of inner-city communities is important, it does not encourage society to face racism. Racist stereotypes are perpetuated out of ignorance, allowing for poverty and disparity to be considered acceptable. While the efforts of those working in the inner-city must be supported, housing opportunities for Aboriginal people need to be expanded outside the traditional location.

Inequality and exclusion are neither healthy nor inevitable, but they are obviously deeply rooted and self-perpetuating. The existing pattern results from a history of discrimination and will not likely change without local leadership.

The impact of segregation and poverty concentration can be seen in Saskatoon; to perpetuate them in housing developments is not recommended. Improved housing and community structure will improve the position of the growing Aboriginal population, which has the potential to reduce racial tensions.

According to the 2001 census, Saskatoon's population was 222,635. Those identifying as Aboriginal numbered 20,275, or 9.11 per cent. From 1996 to 2001, the total city population grew by 3.1 per cent, but the Aboriginal population grew by 7.3 per cent. Much of the Aboriginal population is concentrated on the west side, with percentages up to 30 per cent in some neighbourhoods. On the east side, Aboriginal percentages do not exceed 10 per cent in the most diverse neighbourhoods.

The South Saskatchewan River flows through the centre of the city, dividing west from east. Idylwyld Drive runs parallel to this physical barrier and has been identified as "the great divide." Development abounds in the eastern direction. According to urban theory, growth of outlying areas features different design and composition than the inner core. This relationship is evident in Saskatoon: the further to the periphery the higher the income.

The growth of wealthy neighborhoods on the outskirts surrounding low income neighbourhoods in the centre produces differentiations and lack of cohesion. Furthermore, the concentration of poverty in west side neighbourhoods creates serious socioeconomic and political tensions.

# Demographics

## Socio-demographic Study of Aboriginal Population in Saskatoon

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To collect comprehensive socio-demographic data on the Aboriginal population of Saskatoon.

Commencing in May 2004, the City Planning Department contracted with the Bridges and Foundations Project to assess the data needed to update the *Neighbourhood Profiles of Aboriginal Population* (which were published in 1999 and based on the 1996 census) and to acquire the necessary data from Statistics Canada.

This resulting *Socio-demographic Study of Aboriginal Population in Saskatoon* describes in detail:

- the various ways of counting the Aboriginal population in the city
- the growth of the Aboriginal identity population during the five-year period between 1996 and 2001, and (assuming the same rate of growth) the projected Aboriginal population in 2006
- the relative size and proportion of Aboriginal population in Saskatoon and other cities in Saskatchewan and Canada
- fertility and mortality rates of Aboriginal population
- the changing concentration and distribution of Aboriginal population by neighbourhoods
- Aboriginal migration into and out of the city
- mobility of Aboriginal residents within the city
- changing age and family structure of Aboriginal residents
- levels of education of Aboriginal residents
- changing Aboriginal involvement in the active labour force, including income, types of occupations, unemployment rate, and unpaid housework and care of dependents
- trends in types of housing occupied by Aboriginal residents
- the changing relative strength of Aboriginal culture in an urban environment, including language use and religious affiliation
- differential crime rates in Saskatoon neighbourhoods

This report also provides socio-demographic profiles of selected neighbourhoods having the highest concentrations of Aboriginal population.



# Photography

## Documentary Photography Project

**Report by:** Kirsten Anderson, B.F.A.

**Purpose:** To photograph urban Aboriginal housing (exterior and interior) and living conditions in Saskatoon.

The Bridges and Foundations Project anticipated the need for quality documentary photography of Aboriginal housing and living conditions in Saskatoon. Such photographs could be used in displays at conferences, special exhibits, brochures, posters, and publications of the Project. It was felt that documentary photography could be an important way to describe urban Aboriginal life, supplementing surveys and written commentaries.

Following receipt of a formal proposal dated April 26, 2002 for a documentary photography project, the Management Committee of the Project contracted Kirsten Anderson, BFA to photograph various aspects of Aboriginal life in Saskatoon. A graduate of the photography program in the School of Fine Arts at Concordia University, Kirsten Anderson was a former resident of Saskatoon familiar with the city's neighbourhoods. She returned to Saskatoon on a two-month assignment to carry out this project during July and August 2002, and later continued this work during December.

The assignment involved photographing: first, housing types (abandoned properties, homes in disrepair, apartment blocks, as well as better quality homes); second, housing provided by partner organizations (eg. Quint, Sun Ridge, Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, Cress/Saskatoon Tribal Council, etc.); third, housing conditions (interior dilapidation, mold, overcrowding, and better conditions); fourth, urban Aboriginal life and social problems in general (residents, families, children, elderly, street scenes indicative of inner-city living); fifth, development of Aboriginal infrastructure in the city (educational institutions, community centres, financial services, etc.).

In sum, 491 black and white photographs and 20 colour photographs were taken, comprising an informative and diverse documentary record of Aboriginal life in Saskatoon. Contact sheets of all photographs commissioned are retained in the archives of the Bridges and Foundations Project.

To date, photographs have been selected for three exhibits at conferences. In addition, photographs from this collection have been used in the Project brochure, in several posters, and in the final report, and are expected to be used in further publications.

## **Affordable Housing and Community Economic Development Videos**

**Report by:** Quint Development Corporation

**Purpose:** To illustrate in film the effect of Quint's Affordable Housing Program on housing cooperative members.

Quint Development Corporation created two videos that describe, through personal stories, the effect the Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program has had on the lives of families in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods.

One video is 30 minutes and is used for workshops; the second is a six-minute promotional video. They describe the impact of Quint's Affordable Housing Program on the lives of housing cooperative members. The longer video evaluates the success of the program's goals, focusing on stabilizing living situations in the community and increasing residents' pride and commitment to their communities.

The longer video adds depth and illustration to "More Than Four Walls and a Roof: A Resource Manual for the Development of Home Ownership Co-operatives," a guidebook for home ownership co-operatives, which Quint produced, with support from Bridges and Foundations.



Photo by Kirsten Anderson

## Surveys

### **Aboriginal Housing Needs in Saskatoon: A Survey of SaskNative Rentals Clients**

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To create an updated profile of current SaskNative Rentals clients as a sample of urban Aboriginal housing needs.

SaskNative Rentals Inc. is a non-profit organization that helps Aboriginal families obtain well-maintained units with rent related to family income. In operation for more than 30 years, it manages 360 units. SaskNative Rentals believes that people who live clean, healthy lives can go on to become productive citizens with renewed self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

This survey produced an updated profile of current SaskNative Rentals clients, focussing on demographics, analysis of housing needs, and background information relating to migration. In-depth interviews with 336 respondents provided a useful insight into Aboriginal renters who seek improved accommodation and better quality of life.

The population was well-educated and wanted to stay in Saskatoon to get more education and employment. The growing number of young Aboriginal students seeking accommodation through SaskNative Rentals is noteworthy and a portent of a changing socioeconomic profile. These are the Aboriginal people most likely to become successful.

Also noteworthy was the increasing employment variety of Aboriginal residents. While the Aboriginal population has been mobile, this is becoming less so: people interviewed viewed themselves as relatively permanent urban residents, and many had lived at the same address for years.

We did not encounter many complaints about the city or about SaskNative Rentals. The prevalent view was that Saskatoon is a good place to live and SaskNative Rentals is performing a much-needed service. Yet SaskNative Rentals personnel said demand for suitable housing far exceeds supply.

SaskNative Rentals, the most experienced agency serving Aboriginals, is hindered by civic taxation, making affordability difficult.

**Saskatoon Aboriginal Neighbourhood Survey:  
A Survey of Aboriginal Households in City Neighbourhoods**

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To randomly gather information on Aboriginal residents of Saskatoon not available from census data or the City of Saskatoon.

This survey not only collected the desired information, it allowed Aboriginal residents to express personal views and experiences. What was learned improved methodology for later surveys and eventually the large-scale neighbourhood needs survey in 2004. The information from all these surveys enabled the Bridges and Foundations Project to make specific recommendations on affordable and better housing for urban Aboriginals.

Many interviews for this survey were conducted in poorer inner city neighbourhoods, which had the highest prostitution, break and entry, and violence rates in the city and among the highest in Canada. Youth gangs were rapidly becoming more significant. Residents were wary of strangers and interviewers (especially female) were at risk. Residents were interested in the survey and quite open, once entry into the home was permitted; however it was often difficult to gain entry. There were 87 in-depth household interviews covering some 300 occupants.

The sample population was young, with only 11.4 per cent of respondents over 50; almost half were between 20 and 29. A substantial number (17.2%) reported that they were unemployed and only slightly more than a third claimed to be employed full time; however many of the household heads interviewed would not respond to this question or indicated that this question was not applicable. Information was collected on income received from social assistance and various sorts of transfer payments.

Although 42.5 % of respondents reported they had private landlords, a wide range of property-holding companies were named. Relatively few were community-based or Aboriginal, such as Quint Development Corp., Cress Housing and SaskNative Rentals. Fewer still were properties managed by the City of Saskatoon or Saskatoon Housing Authority. All told, 24 different companies and 25 individual landlords were identified.

Many factors were mentioned when asked what prevented home ownership. Many blamed finances: affordability, income, credit, down payments, difficulty saving, etc. Other factors were high mobility (14.9 %), planned stay in city short-term (11.5 %), employment problems (8.0 %), not wanting the ownership responsibility (6.9 %), student status (3.4 %), as well as racism and prejudice, lack of opportunities, living with grandparents, family problems, government bureaucracy, fear of vandalism.

## **Survey of Urban Housing Needs of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation**

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To provide an updated profile of the members of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation living in the urban environment, and to identify their housing needs.

This survey was conducted in conjunction with the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Affordable Housing Program. The Muskeg Lake Cree Nation has a home reserve 90 km northwest of Saskatoon and an urban reserve in Saskatoon (for institutional and commercial purposes). It consists of 1,024 adult voting members out of a membership of 1,645. About 250 are on reserve, more than half are in Saskatoon and the remainder elsewhere.

Specific research objectives were to determine why Muskeg Lake Cree Nation members are moving to urban centres, which neighbourhoods they're moving to and why, the type of housing they're living in, their level of satisfaction with the housing, their interest in house ownership, the type of housing they want and need, their needs from urban neighbourhoods and the services available. The long-term research objectives were to lessen barriers to house ownership, increase the number of families owning houses, and improve home ownership opportunities.

The survey questionnaire was completed by 144 respondents, but information covered about three times as many who were occupants of the respondents' households.

The majority of adults worked in technical, trade, administrative, sales, or professional occupations. Most had a high school education and many a university or technical education.

Information was collected on types of housing of band members, as well as their satisfaction with present accommodations. While a majority were satisfied with their accommodations, of the minority of respondents not satisfied, half said their house was too small.

A majority were renting. Reasons given for renting included their inability to afford the type of home desired, inability to obtain a mortgage, feeling uncomfortable dealing with banks, wanting the flexibility of mobility, or viewing their stay in their present accommodation as only short-term, and not wanting the responsibility of home ownership.

Of the respondents who owned houses, most were satisfied with them but a substantial minority were not. The two most customary reasons for dissatisfaction were that the house was too small or in poor condition.

The majority of respondents expressed interest in a program to help them to buy a house. The first choice of most was a detached house. A safe neighborhood was the preferred location.

While annual household income for most households was well above the average for Aboriginal families in Saskatoon, many had significant debt payments or financial difficulties.

Housing initiatives suggested by respondents were low interest loans or mortgages, low payment plans, rent-to-own plans and co-operative housing; some respondents would like to see assistance for off-reserve houses, such as help with a down payment.

## **Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Affordable Housing Program Survey of Band Members**

**Report by:** Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Affordable Housing Program Development Committee

**Purpose:** To develop family profiles and determine band members' ability to become homeowners, along with their wants and needs in housing, neighbourhoods and communities.

Muskeg Lake Cree Nation wants to establish an Affordable Housing Program for its members and a three-step approach has been implemented, covering information gathering, program designing and program development. This report is the result of the first step.

The information collected will be the basis for the design of the program in such areas as program principles, concepts, values and processes. It will also help identify program partners who will be consulted to design and develop the program.

The specific objectives of the first step were to determine:

- The family profile of members
- Where members live
- Their current housing
- Their satisfaction level with their housing
- Whether members are interested in owning houses
- The type of housing members want and need
- Their preferences and needs in neighbourhoods and communities
- Members' financial capacity
- The type of program preferred and how it should be funded

For additional analysis of survey results, see Survey of Urban Housing Needs of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation (Anderson).

## **Migration and Mobility Between Reserve and City: A Survey of Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation Residents in Saskatoon**

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To determine the causes and dynamics of migration and mobility between the Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation Reserve and Saskatoon

Interviews were conducted by Heather Buffalo, a Whitecap band member, under the supervision of Dr. Anderson. The sample included 30 households representing 105 people (all band members living in Saskatoon who could be located and agreed to an interview).

Asked when they had first moved to Saskatoon, three respondents said they arrived before 1980, eight during the 1980s and 16 during the 1990s, suggesting movement to the city is increasing.

Employment was the most frequently given reason for moving (43.3 %) and more than half (53.3%) remain for that reason, while 33.3 % remain for education and 23.3 % because of improved accommodations; 20.0 % cite family or being close to friends. Most respondents (60 %) do not intend to move back to the reserve while 13.3 % do.

As for those living in Saskatoon, there were on average 3.5 people in a married or common-law household, almost half between the ages of 20 and 29. Most respondents were employed or were students. Only 10 % were unemployed. Other household members were usually dependants under 19. Respondents most likely lived on Saskatoon's west side and most were satisfied with their living situation.

With respect to housing, the most frequent answer given for renting was the inability to buy the type of house desired. The main complaints were that the current house was too small or in a poor location. Choosing a neighbourhood was linked to safety, proximity to schools, services, entertainment and employment.

When making comparisons, respondents favoured urban living because of better transportation, better services, more opportunities in general, better employment opportunities, proximity to family or friends, more individualism, sense of community, poor highway between city and reserve, expense of travel from reserve to city, better healthcare, limited reserve accommodation, and disagreement with reserve politics. Reasons favouring living on reserve were peace and quiet, more sense of community, greater chance to maintain traditional culture, proximity of family or friends, and less crime.

The survey explored in detail the degree of contact and movement between the reserve and the city.



## **First Nations Housing in Saskatoon: A Survey of Cress Housing Clients**

**Report by:** Dr. Alan B. Anderson, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Saskatchewan

**Purpose:** To gather information on clients of Cress Housing Corporation, an affiliate of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, particularly their satisfaction with their present housing.

Interviews for this survey were conducted during appraisals of energy efficiency in Cress houses. This enabled surveyors to gain access to the households; however time was restricted to little more than half an hour. In all, interviews were conducted in 63 households, although data were gathered on other occupants, or about 200 residents.

In 15 of the households the family consisted of three people; however there were 14 households with four and 14 with six. Dependent children lived in 90.5 % of households. One third of these children were between 15 and 19.

Cress Housing residents tend to be long-term residents of Saskatoon: two thirds have lived in the city for more than 10 years. Of those not originally from Saskatoon, almost half came from a reserve. More than a third of respondents said education was a primary reason for migration to Saskatoon. Family was mentioned by 19 % and employment attracted 20.7 %. A majority (57.1%) declared they would not return to the reserve to live; 31.7 % said they might return after retirement or if there was suitable housing or jobs.

Questioned about reasons for choosing Cress Housing, a large majority (79.5 %) cited low rental; other reasons included that housing was supplied by an Aboriginal organization, the respondent had rented from Cress previously, Cress houses were well-maintained, Cress houses included yards where children can play, there was enough room for families, a house was preferred over an apartment, or the reserve helped to find a suitable house.

Satisfaction rates were high: 52.4 % were very satisfied and 20.6 % somewhat satisfied. Only 7.9% claimed to be dissatisfied. Maintenance was a key issue.

Cress Housing policy is to fix rent to income, typically at 25 %. Despite this affordability, surveyors found finance was a common barrier to home ownership. Generating a down payment was cited as an obstacle by many, along with bad credit rating, lack of job, lack of familiarity with purchasing procedures, indebtedness, not wanting to move children, and commitment required.

## **Conferences and Workshops Organized by Bridges and Foundations: CURA**

### **Urban Aboriginal Housing: Challenges and Opportunities Mini-Conference, September 18, 2003**

This conference drew 56 people from the housing industry, financial sector, community-based organizations and various government agencies. While many of the challenges or opportunities are well known, there was a valuable exchange of ideas. An underlying sense of urgency existed in many of the group discussions. People said they were tired of “just talking about ideas” and wanted to see action. A complete report on the mini-conference’s findings is posted on the Bridges and Foundations: CURA website.

### **Community and Housing Design Charette One-Day Session, October 7, 2004**

The Affordable New Home Development Foundation (ANHDF) facilitated a gathering of community people, stakeholders, builders, designers and developers to explore different housing for three identified lots in Saskatoon. Background information included photographs, maps, amenities, community profiles, Aboriginal wants and needs, affordability criteria, management and financing, and the February 2004 Wanuskewin design workshop report. A summary of this charette appears in the Report Summaries section.

### **Building Communities Through Bridges and Foundations Conference, November 1 to 3, 2004**

This conference created directions for building communities with accessible, affordable and appropriate housing for Aboriginals in urban centres. It highlighted 23 Bridges and Foundations: CURA research projects under three conference themes:

- Protocol: The protocol, ethics and implications of sharing knowledge between housing stakeholders
- Knowledge Sharing: How knowledge gained through research can benefit housing stakeholders
- Policy Change: Possible stakeholder roles in creating a tangible direction for housing policy change

Presenters discussed urban Aboriginal housing issues such as affordable housing, rental housing, home ownership, student housing, Elder housing, apprenticeship, business plans and financing. Conference Coordinator was Philip McCloskey.

### **Affordable Home Ownership for Aboriginal People in Saskatoon: Financial and Funding Options Workshop, December 7, 2004**

This one-day session for lenders, mortgage insurers, builders and developers, representatives of the city and province, and potential investors and financial advisors followed an agenda that provided for innovative thinking on financing home ownership for Aboriginals.

## **Conferences and Workshops in Which Bridges and Foundations: CURA Participated**

### **Aboriginal Policy Research Conference Ottawa, November 25 to 28, 2002**

More than 500 people participated in 52 sessions at this conference, jointly organized by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the University of Western Ontario. This first national Aboriginal Policy Research Conference marked an important step in the integration of knowledge on Aboriginal policy. Recent findings, indigenous knowledge and conventional wisdom were discussed by delegates, many of whom represented Aboriginal communities.

### **CUExpo International: Community-University Research: Partnerships, Policy and Progress, Saskatoon, May 8 to 10, 2003**

The purpose of this conference was to build the capacity of colleges, universities, community, government and business organizations to start and maintain productive partnerships; to foster community applications of research; and to contribute to the program and policy agendas for governments, granting agencies, community organizations, business and universities.

### **Miyo-wicehtowin Gathering: Treaty Awareness and Community-Building, Saskatoon, March 19 to 21, 2004**

Miyo-wicehtowin Gathering was a treaty awareness and community building event. “Miyo-wicehtowin” is a Cree word that means building right relationships. Participants learned about treaties and how they are a good guide to right relationships. They also had an opportunity to explore Aboriginal and new immigrant worldviews and understandings about the treaties. There was also discussion about the roots and historical basis of racism.

### **International Indigenous Knowledge Symposium, Saskatoon, May 10 to 13, 2004**

This international symposium brought invited scholars, Elders and learners to discuss and recommend guidelines for public institutions to integrate Indigenous knowledge. Such integration seeks to improve the capacity of higher learning institutions to respond to the needs of Aboriginal learners by supporting the recognition and integration of Indigenous knowledge systems.

### **Keeping the Plan Alive: Community Forum to Update the Saskatoon Plan for Homelessness and Housing, Saskatoon, June 17, 2004**

The Saskatoon Community Plan for Homelessness and Housing is a document that stands apart in Canada. While funding support for the development of the plan comes from the National Homelessness Initiative the document speaks to issues that go beyond homelessness. Significant engagement of both stakeholders and those in housing need is included in an annual update known as Keeping the Plan Alive. A community forum on June 17, 2004, drew input from more than 400 individuals.

### **Roundtable on Housing (PRI/SSHRC), Ottawa, October 20, 2004**

This workshop explored the role of housing, both as a dimension and a determinant of exclusion, and focused on clarifying the public role in ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing and to a quality living environment.

## **Instructional Resources**

### **Quint Development Corporation: Quint Community Resources Manual**

Quint Development Corporation created a resource manual to serve as a guide for community groups to develop affordable housing initiatives. Quint documented the lessons learned through its five years of developing and supporting home ownership co-operatives for low-income families in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. The manual reflects knowledge gained through the creation of seven housing co-operatives, which enabled 70 families to become home owners.

**Website:** [bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca](http://bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca)

Bridges and Foundations: CURA worked with the Division of Media and Technology at the University of Saskatchewan to create a website for this project. The website provides information on the project's background, how people could become involved with it, the final reports on research projects and other relevant data.

### **Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Documentary Photography Project**

Kirsten Anderson, BFA, provided documentary photographs relevant to the central themes of the Bridges and Foundations: CURA project, such as housing types and living conditions, accommodation provided by partner organizations, urban Aboriginal life in general, urban Aboriginal infrastructure and project research in progress. With appropriate ethics approval, these photographs were used in project brochures, displays, conferences and publications.

### **Affordable Housing and Community Economic Development Videos**

Quint Development Corporation created two videos that describe, through personal stories, the effects the Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program has had upon the lives of families in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. One is 30 minutes and is used for workshops; the second is a six-minute promotional video. They describe the impact of Quint's Affordable Housing Program on the lives of housing co-operative members. The longer video evaluates the success of the program's goals, focusing on stabilizing living situations in the community and increasing residents' pride and commitment to their communities.

### **CUMFI Housing Strategy Policy and Procedures Manual**

Central Urban Métis Federation (1993) Inc. (CUMFI) developed a strategy to contribute to the reduction of homelessness in Saskatoon. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive continuum of supports to encourage self-sufficiency within a supported housing environment. An intern developed a comprehensive policy and procedures manual for its housing projects and an initial business plan for the CUMFI Homelessness and Housing Strategy.

## Scholarships

### **Deborah Drake: Post-Incarceration Experiences: Listening to Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Ex-Prisoners**

This research for an MA thesis in sociology illustrated through interviews with former federally imprisoned males, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, that both groups experienced significant difficulty integrating into society due to lack of social programs as well as stigmatization that surrounds incarceration. She proposed that former Aboriginal inmates would experience further difficulty because they are returning to criminogenic environments and are disadvantaged because of racism and general discrimination. Drake successfully defended her thesis in August 2003. She is continuing her education at Cambridge.

### **Carol Romanow: HIV-AIDS and Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan: Colonization, Marginalization and Recovery**

This scholarship enabled Romanow, a Department of Sociology masters student, to complete her thesis research on the above subject. Her research revealed the extent of the specific needs of urban Aboriginal women and their families in Saskatoon with respect to housing and quality of life. She also wrote a report that was posted on the Bridges and Foundations: CURA website.

### **Doyle Anderson: Organizational Management Approaches Utilized by Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Businesses in Saskatchewan**

Anderson, an interdisciplinary doctoral student at the University of Saskatchewan, would investigate the management approaches of Aboriginal businesses in Saskatchewan, comparing them to those of non-Aboriginal businesses in the same industries and market regions. These data could be used to bring non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal organizations together in the residential construction industry. Anderson produced a doctoral thesis proposal for this research and a summary of his work for the first six months of the scholarship.

### **Alex Iheduru: Aboriginal Residential Settlement Patterns in Saskatoon: Exploring the Relation Between Neighbourhood Preference and Residential Segregation**

Iheduru commenced work on his doctoral thesis proposal in Geography, which was supported for two years by Bridges and Foundations, and accepted in April 2004. His focus was urban Aboriginal concentrations and neighbourhood change in Saskatoon.

### **Cathy Nilson: The FSIN-Province of Saskatchewan Gaming Partnership: 1995-2002**

Nilson completed her Masters degree in Political Studies at the University of Saskatchewan . It analyzed aspects of partnerships, such as accountability and how it affects the nature of a partnership. Her thesis examines Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations and could be used as a

model for establishing partnerships. Her research looked at the relationship in partnerships and relationship building between organizations involved in housing.

**Carol Vandale: The *Building Skills, Building Homes* Project:  
A Community Education Study in Alternative Lifestyle Practices  
Through Straw Bale Construction**

This project was the basis of Vandale's M Ed thesis for the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan and with it she was able to explore innovative options for low-income people. She coordinated this pilot project, which trained 11 young, predominantly Aboriginal, women in natural building methods by erecting two straw bale structures. The unemployed women learned basic carpentry and were trained in yurts, vaults and straw bale structures.

## **Internships**

### **Robin Keith: SaskNative Survey**

Keith, with the help of SaskNative Rentals, employed personal interviews and used existing files to collect data on Aboriginal migration and mobility, as well as housing options and housing satisfaction from SaskNative Rentals clientele in Saskatoon. Information was gathered through interviews with 300 families, which covered more than 1,000 family members.

### **Alex Iheduru: Aboriginal Demographic Analysis in Saskatoon**

Iheduru, a doctoral student in Geography, assisted in the creation of a demographic profile of Saskatoon's Aboriginal residents with the City of Saskatoon Planning Department. Iheduru authored a report, "A Quadrant of Poverty: Tracing the Spatial Divide Between the Poor and Non-Poor in Saskatoon."

### **Cara Spence: An Analysis of Race Relations in Saskatoon: The Contributions of the Housing Sector**

Spence, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, examined issues involving housing and the relationship between poverty and discrimination for Aboriginals in Saskatoon. She had the help of the City of Saskatoon Race Relations Committee. While working with the Community Services Department of the City of Saskatoon, she developed a renter's handbook, which the city plans to publish.

### **Jess Chhokar: Urban First Nations Residential Development Manual**

Chhokar, of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Housing Department, created a manual for buying a house for the benefit of Aboriginals. He found that housing investment in Saskatoon is relatively safe and makes economic sense. The historic average yearly growth in property values is four per cent. His manual contains information on available funding, partners who can help, financing options and resources needed.

### **Judy Wasacase: International Indigenous Knowledge Symposium**

Wasacase worked with Director Priscilla Suttee to organize this international symposium in Saskatoon, May 10 to 13, 2004, which brought together scholars, Elders and learners to discuss and recommend guidelines for public institutions to integrate Indigenous knowledge.

**Erin Foss: Affordable Housing and Home Ownership:  
Business Case Development for the Saskatoon Market**

Foss is Research and Communications Assistant with the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association. She conducted demographic research on the city and its labour force, with attention to the housing situation facing Saskatoon's Aboriginals, and found the time to develop housing programs has never been better. Low interest rates, more Aboriginal people entering the work force, rural-urban migration and growing partnerships could all contribute to affordable housing. She also found the residential construction industry is experiencing skilled labour shortages, which will worsen because a large number of construction professionals are near retirement.

**Carmen Cripps: CUMFI Housing Strategy  
Policy and Procedures Manual**

Cripps worked for the Central Urban Métis Federation (1993) Inc. (CUMFI) and developed a strategy to contribute to the reduction of homelessness in Saskatoon. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive continuum of supports to encourage self-sufficiency within a supported housing environment. She also developed a comprehensive policy and procedures manual for its housing projects and an initial business plan for the CUMFI Homelessness and Housing Strategy.

**Jacqueline Thomarar: A Summary of the Inner Workings  
of the Bridges and Foundations Project**

Thomarar was a student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Saskatchewan who spent more than five months assembling information on the objectives and activities of the Bridges and Foundations Project Project.

**Ushasri Nannapaneni: Data Processing**

Nannapaneni is a second year doctoral student in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan and has a Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Hyderabad (India) and a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Saskatchewan . As a graduate intern she processed data from surveys conducted by Bridges and Foundations: CURA under the supervision of Dr. Alan Anderson.

**Rebecca Hatten: Data Processing**

Hatten was an undergraduate sociology student who worked on the surveys for the Whitecap Reserve, the Muskeg Lake Reserve and a Saskatoon neighbourhood, performing data entry and writing tasks.



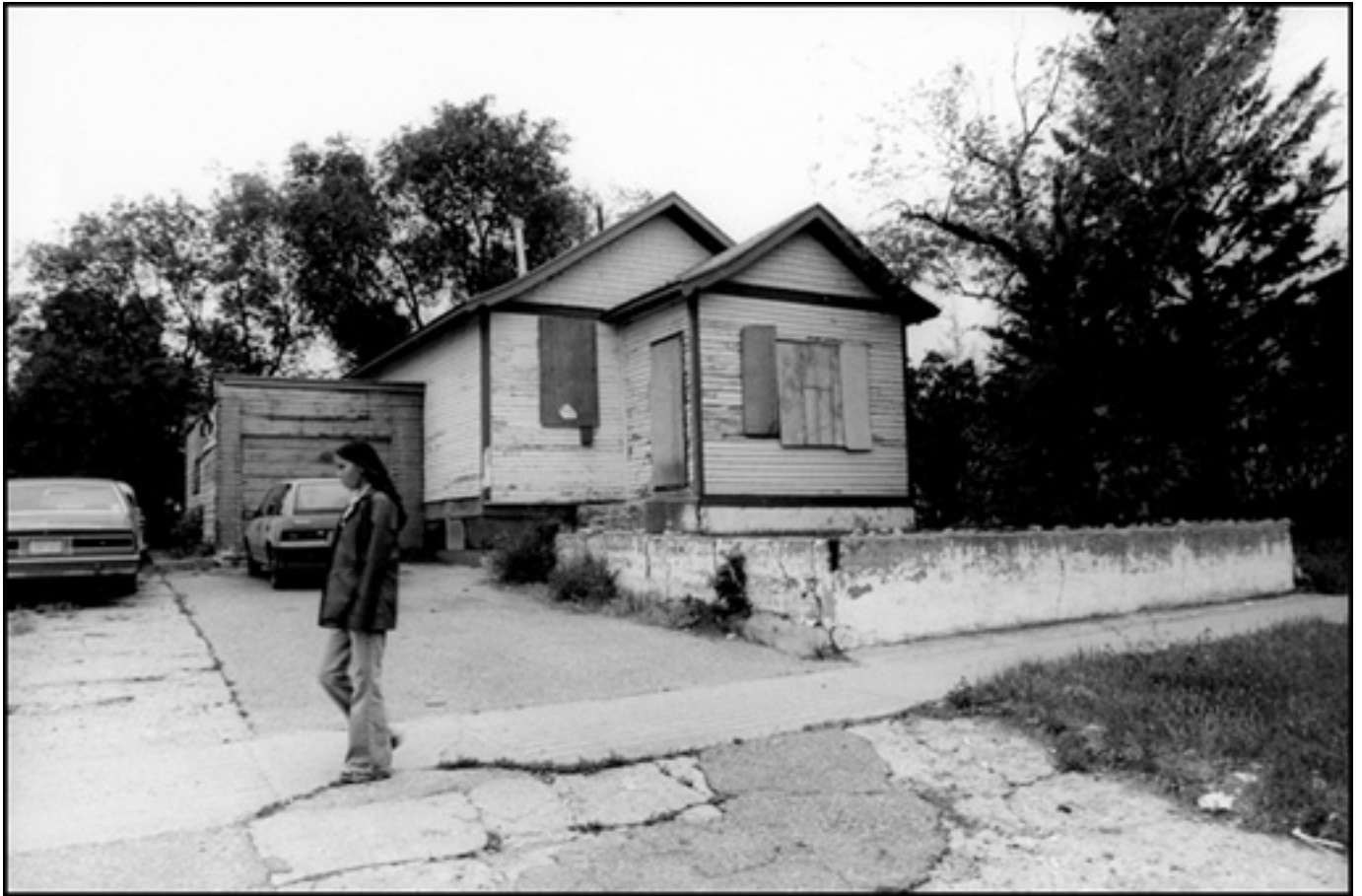


Photo by Kirsten Anderson