

**The City as Home:
The Sense of Belonging Among Aboriginal
Youth in Saskatoon**

– Final Report–

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I am grateful for the contributions by Peter Dodson and Patricia Gonzalez, who worked as research assistants. Peter contributed the annotated bibliography that appears as Appendix A. Patricia researched sources, gathered materials, helped moderate the focus groups and transcribed the interviews. Patricia's insight in our debriefing sessions was very instructive.

Summary

This research contributes to the literature about the definition of youth, youth in Saskatoon, identity and the requisites of a place of belonging. The researcher concludes that some Aboriginal youth express a view that the urban environment is not providing an adequate solution for Aboriginal youths' needs of the city as home. This report presents the researcher's interpretation of sixteen youths' discussion about what is needed for a home, and a sense of belonging. It is based on data collected in the summer and fall of 2004. Sixteen youth participated in two focus groups organized by the following criteria:

Aboriginal youth between the ages of 16 and 29, living in Saskatoon and participating in programs that are assisting them with housing and/or skills development. The researcher determined that youth is a stage of development that may stretch over a longer or shorter period of time. It is defined not only by chronological age, but also by an individual's growth towards self-knowledge and self-actualization. The researcher interpreted the youth to say that issues of safety and stability are a major concern. Youths' identity is constructed with knowledge of their Indigenous ancestors and their sense of belonging to a social network of people. Their individual identity develops out of their relationships, duty and responsibility to the group. The city as home, as a place of belonging is more than a physical geography and architectural landscape. Home is a physical, social, and spiritual sphere. Home is where children and youth are protected, where they are nourished and taught to be independent and resourceful. Home is where one is trained to fulfill one's purpose for individual and social growth, and is nurtured for physical and inner well-being. The researcher heard the youth speak of the great benefit of programs within their community that are based in Aboriginal cultures, that build meaningful relationships with elders and children, and that challenge them to explore and achieve their individual potential.

Introduction

At the turn of the 21st century, statistics render a bleak picture of Aboriginal youths' lives in Canadian cities. Numbers draw objective lines marking disadvantage, disproportionate experience of harsh socio-economic conditions, and disparity. Qualitative research brings this picture to life with the intimacy of individual people's lives reflectively narrated by youths' voices. The representation is tragic, poignant, heroic, and hopeful.

This research project relates to recent quantitative and qualitative studies of Aboriginal youths' experience in Canadian cities. It contributes to the literature an interpretation of 16 Aboriginal youths' reflections on their relationships with and within the Saskatoon's urban landscape. Topics include identity, a sense of belonging, and youths' identified needs to be protected, nourished, nurtured, and challenged.

Purpose

This research project interprets 16 Aboriginal youths' discussion about their sense of belonging in the city. The research set out to ascertain what contributes to Aboriginal youths' sense of belonging, and to report this in the form of recommendations that may be informative to urban planners, city councilors, and provincial and federal policy writers. The desired outcome of the project is to contribute information useful to the Bridges and Foundations initiative to build sustainable relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and to inform designing options for culturally supportive communities and quality housing options.

Project Background

This section gives information to show how the research relates to recent literature about Aboriginal youth in Canada. A definition of youth precedes the description of recent research focusing on Aboriginal youth in Canadian cities in general and Canadian prairie cities in particular. Statistics outline the social and economic situation experienced by Aboriginal youth in Saskatoon.

Definition of Youth

Youth, as a stage in life, appears to be defined by the period of about 6 – 10 years between childhood and adulthood. Youth age range is variously set by Statistics Canada, National Aboriginal Organizations and federal programs to be between 15-25 years, 13-29 years, and 18-24 years (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2003, p. 6). The age range sets a boundary or standard, which may lead to erroneous assumptions about norms of education, employment, career development, sexual activity, parenthood, spousal relationships, and residence. It is widely accepted that the pattern of experiences for the majority of Aboriginal youth is distinct from that of the majority of non-Aboriginal youth (Canada Council on Social Development, 2003, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2001, Government of Saskatchewan, 2001, Douglas and Hunter, 2003). Parenthood, poverty, mobility, homelessness, and incarceration are among the life situations that may make it unfeasible for people between the ages of 15 to 25 to take advantage of education, employment and training programs. Federal programs and

policies targeting youth generally follow the 15-25 years age range and for these, youth younger than 15 and older than 25 are deemed ineligible.

The researcher contends that age alone is not a sufficient common denominator and that experiences, levels of maturity, independence, or responsibility, should be among the criteria for inclusion in the category of youth. This research used a working definition of youth based on criteria of chronological age, life experiences and self-realization. In this report the term youth refers to a stage in life and a category of individuals. Youth is characterized by an age range between 15 and 29 years, and the individuals' efforts to establish themselves in the social and working world as self-actualized and self-reliant persons. This definition operates from the premise that youth is a stage of life, a crucial period of development graduated by individual efforts, achievements and experiences. Youth as individuals are young men and young women. Though generalizations about Aboriginal youths' experience may be drawn, uniformity may not be assumed, and conformity to a youth archetype does not exist. The reader, aware of various definitions of the term youth, senses the limited accuracy of the picture drawn by statistics and the gaps in programming experienced by youth.

Identity

Identity is the sense of oneself as an individual and the sense of oneself belonging to a collective. A person gains a sense of him/herself as an individual by increasing awareness of his/her spiritual, physical, and social being. Through meditation, ceremony, and prayer an individual becomes conscious of his/her spiritual being. Through physical activity, effort and work a person becomes conscious of his/her physical being. Through social interaction and activities that build and sustain reciprocal human relationships a person becomes conscious of his/her social being. Wholeness and secure identity is strengthened if these aspects of oneself are nurtured and protected. This view of identity conforms to Basil Johnston's (1976) presentation of an Anishnawbe perspective of the human being, as a composite of corporeal and incorporeal substances, that strives for self-understanding and is trained to function in society (pp 59-79 and 109-133).

The factors that contribute to a sense of self as an individual may be synonymous with or separate from the factors that contribute to a sense of oneself belonging to a collective (Mihesuah, 2003). A sense of belonging to a collective may be based on shared physical features, ancestry, history, residence, lived experiences, cultural practices and values, language, or legal definition. RCAP (Canada, 1996) identified the elements of Aboriginal identity to include spirituality, language, a land base or ancestral territory, elders, traditional values, family, and ceremonial life (Vol. 4, p. 524). Statistics and check boxes cannot adequately capture this complexity of identity formation. Indeed academics have identified phenomena such as ethnic mobility (Guimond, 2003) and discrepancy between Aboriginal origin and Aboriginal identity (Siggner, 2003) that defy a definitive category of identity. Further the context, audience, and purpose may influence a person to choose one identity over another as master status. For example, a person descended from Métis and Cree ancestors who were treaty signatories, may be federally recognized as a status Indian, but also have the experience of living only in the city. There are numerous collectives to whom this individual may have a sense of belonging: Métis, Cree, First Nations, Status Indian, Treaty Indian, and off-reserve band member. These terms of identity are labels that could be applied by the individual or by outsiders to ascribe identity, belonging, exclusion and/or ineligibility. Depending on the context, audience and purpose a person may use one or all as a master status to self-identify.

Identity may be a topic that has gone out of fashion in academic circles, but each subsequent generation of Aboriginal youth who live in an urban centre must come to terms with it on an individual basis. As youth, they must gain an intimate understanding of who they are as individual beings, and they must gain the recognition of a community of people to affirm their belonging. Youths' sense of self as belonging to a collective is vulnerable to many influences that can undermine their sense of identity and self worth. The shared experiences of real or assumed poverty, racism, and victimization can lead a person to resign oneself to this plight or to reject belonging. Societal attitudes that dismiss contemporary or adapted Aboriginal cultural expressions as less authentic, non-traditional, or unworthy weaken individual and collective identity. Representations of Aboriginal people in media, which are very limited in range and depth, foster a mistaken

assumption of a narrow collective experience, and confines insider and outsider ascription of identity (Vickers, 1998, p. 3)

A youth's sense of belonging to a collective is strengthened by his or her own subjective and outsider's objective recognition of the individual's cultural competence.

Competence is broadly defined as the functional and instrumental skills required to perform adult tasks within a particular culture. Ogbu (1995) on the topic of human competence notes that "child rearing ideas and techniques in a given culture are shared by the home/family and other institutions or settings containing the child in such a way as to make the child rearing a kind of culturally organized formula to ensure competence and survival" (p. 269-270). There are particular knowledge, skills, and attributes that adults consciously nurture in the upcoming generation to direct them to be the kind of adults that are valued in the society (Ogbu, 1995, pp 258-263, referencing LeVine, 1967).

Although the topic of identity formation merits greater contemplation than this cursory description provides, this model of identity formation meets this research project's objective of making recommendations that support Aboriginal youths' sense of identity and belonging in an urban setting.

Themes in Research Relevant to Aboriginal Youth in Canadian Cities

A survey of literature published since 2000 reveals common themes to describe the context of Aboriginal youths' lives in Canadian cities. These themes are low income and education attainment, unemployment and poverty, core housing need, mobility and homelessness, exploitation and alienation (see annotated bibliography, Appendix A).

Indeed the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (2003) concluded,

Of all issues affecting urban Aboriginal people, some of the most pressing and urgent are the needs of Aboriginal youth. We are struck by the absolute necessity of addressing their needs – particularly those estranged from their cultural heritage and the broader community in which they reside (p. 50).

In addition, The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples found that

Whereas the vast majority of programming is geared to the social pathology of being urban and Aboriginal, we were told by youth that they wanted a supportive

place to go where they could tap into their interests, develop and nurture their leadership abilities: a place where they were more than just the sum of their problems (p. 52).

Building on youths' participation in their own deliverance is common to recommendations to address the needs of Aboriginal youth in cities (Government of Saskatchewan, 2001, Save the Children, 2000, Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2003, Walker, 2003). Youths' optimism, desire, and self confidence in their ability to direct change are natural resources to be used in the reconstruction of the urban landscape

Economic and Social Situation of Aboriginal Youth in Saskatoon

The majority of Aboriginal youth in Saskatoon lives under stressed conditions and have daunting societal obstacles on their path to gain equal social and economic status with their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Saskatoon is noted for being the Canadian census metropolitan area (CMA¹) with the highest concentration of Aboriginal people (9% of total population) (The Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003 p. 1). Saskatoon is also noted for being the city with the second largest proportion of Aboriginal people living in extremely poor neighbourhoods at 30.2 % (La Prairie & Stenning, 2003 p. 185). And Saskatoon's Aboriginal population is young: 20% is between 15-24 years; 58% is younger than 24 years (Canada, 2004). See the following graph "Saskatoon Aboriginal Population by Age Group, 2001".

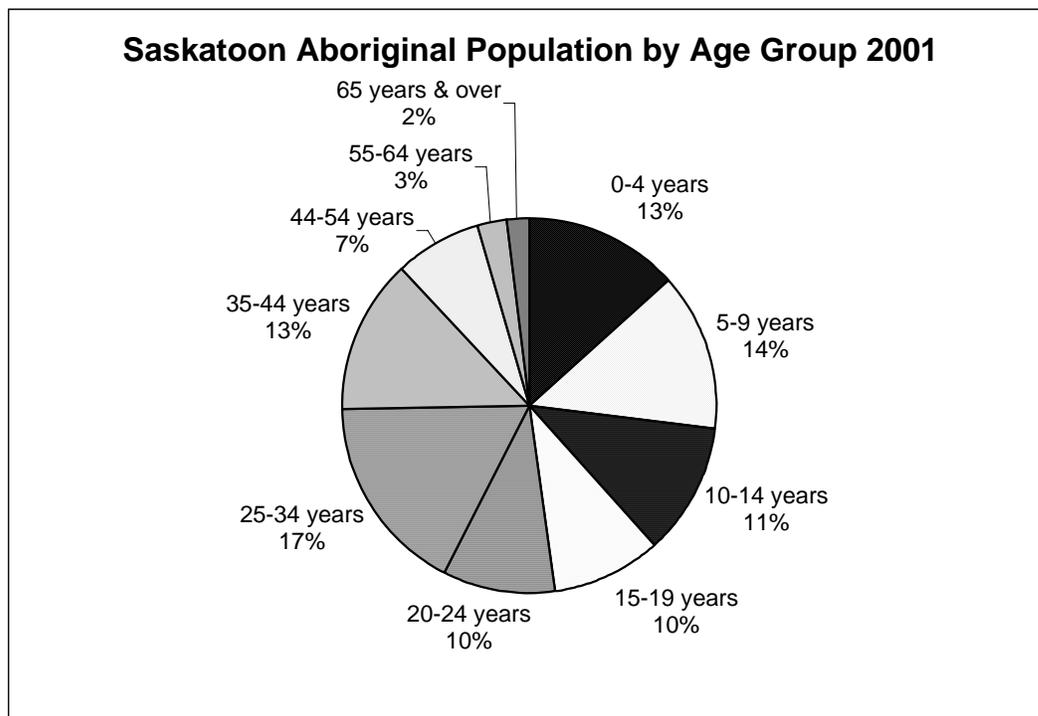
Aboriginal youth are among the groups most economically and socially disadvantaged. Statistics for Saskatchewan show that Aboriginal people are victims of violent crimes at a disproportionate rate. "In 1997, 42% of victims in Prince Albert and Regina were Aboriginal, compared to their 10% proportion in the population of these cities" (Statistics

¹ "A census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). The census population count of the urban core is at least 10,000 to form a census agglomeration and at least 100,000 to form a census metropolitan area. To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data"(Canada, 2003, p. 1).

Canada, 2000). The scope of commonly experienced poverty, unemployment, low education attainment, and lone parenthood is indicated by the following 1996 Census statistics for the Saskatoon:

- 22.5 % of the poor population in Saskatoon is Aboriginal,
- 64.9 % of Aboriginal identity population lives in poverty,
- 51.3% of Aboriginal population earns less than \$10,000,
- 55% of Aboriginal youth lives below the low-income cutoff,
- 25.1 % of Aboriginal population is unemployed (3.7 times the rate of non-Aboriginal population),
- 45% of Aboriginal youth have jobs,
- 48.1% of adult Aboriginal population has less than grade 12 education,
- 10.8% of Aboriginal population is a lone parent

The statistics describe the social and economic context of Aboriginal youth who participated in this research project in the summer and fall of 2004, to discuss their sense of belonging and their sense of the city as home.



Adapted from: Canada. Statistics Canada. (2004, c). Population reporting an Aboriginal identity, by age group, by census metropolitan areas (2001 Census) <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo41e.htm> accessed Dec 17, 2004.

Education and mobility are two significant factors to describe youths' experience of the city. What is common to these two factors is family. Usually high rates of mobility and not completing high school are viewed negatively. This is challenged by the notion that family ties, which promote a sense of belonging and identity formation, are motivating factors in people's decision to move residence or to leave high school before graduating. The 2001 Census shows that 42.3 % Aboriginal adults in Saskatoon did not finish high school and 24% of Aboriginal adults who completed high school did so through a High School Equivalency program (GED). The most frequently selected reason for not finishing high school was "Pregnancy/taking care of children" at 17%, followed by "Wanted to Work" at 15%, and "Had to work" at 11% (Canada, 2004, a). It has been noted in numerous research reports that Aboriginal people change residence at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal people. Norris and Jantzen (2003) refer to this urban-rural mobility as "churn" and argue that is motivated by people moving to maintain family and cultural relationships (p. 111). This concept challenges the idea that community and belonging is confined within a geographical boundary. People's sense of belonging to a collective is maintained within and beyond the city. Norris and Jantzen (2003) state,

The importance of community, social cohesion, and cultural belonging within urban settings cannot be overlooked in the implications of this churn between city and community which, while having negative implications in terms of service delivery within urban areas, may in fact contribute to an increased sense of well-being for the individual in maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity (p. 111).

This idea is further supported by the fact that 42% of adults who moved to Saskatoon selected "Family" as the reason to move. (Canada 2004, b)

The significance of the statistics is that they represent the many hindrances Aboriginal youth struggle against in their effort to set the trajectory of their lives. Youth is a crucial stage of development and vulnerability. The conditions associated with poverty are among those that contribute to over-representation in the criminal justice system. La Prairie and Stenning (2003) conclude that,

There is no question that the particular demographics of the Aboriginal population of Canada (a higher proportion of people in the "high risk" 15 to 24 age group,

lower education levels, higher unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse and addiction, etc.) lead to their over-representation in these vulnerable neighbourhoods, and hence to their overall over-representation in the criminal justice system. There can equally be little doubt any more that these “particular circumstances” of many Aboriginal people are reflected in Aboriginal involvement in both crime and the criminal justice system, both as offenders and victims. (p. 187)

La Prairie and Stenning (2003) go on to state that the rate of representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system is similar to that of other groups with similar social and economic factors (p. 190). Put another way, involvement in the justice system is a consequence of poverty rather than Aboriginal identity or heritage. The numbers show the social consequence of maintaining things as they are.

The statistics are also noteworthy because they are the visible shadows of prejudice and discrimination that individual Aboriginal youth experience. If it is taken to be true that prejudgment is incrementally developed each time a recognized pattern is repeated, then the statistics, illustrating high rates of disadvantage, represent repeated patterns that form prejudgment about Aboriginal people. Prejudgment becomes prejudice when individuals fail to incorporate additional information or knowledge, and discrimination occurs when individuals act based on their prejudice, informed by their unfounded fear, mistrust or hatred. The youth in this study spoke candidly of their experience of prejudice, discrimination, tolerance and compassion.

Methodology

Participant Recruitment

The researcher consulted with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Tribal Council and received letters of support. In addition, the general manager of Saskatchewan Native Theatre, the coordinator of Quint Male Youth Lodge, and the director of Infinity House have granted permission for the researcher to contact the youth in their respective programs and invite the youth to participate in focus group discussions.

Participants were to be selected by the criteria of being Saskatoon Aboriginal youth, between the ages of 16 and 25, who are involved in programs that assist them with life skills, employment training and/or housing. The researcher was prepared to extend the definition of youth age to 29 years. This group of people are likely to have experience and insight to young Aboriginal people's perceptions of adequate, affordable and culturally supportive housing in an urban setting.

The researcher recruited youth to participate in on-site focus group discussions by first contacting the directors of Infinity House (IH), Quint Male Youth Lodge (QMYL) and Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company (SNTC) These programs offer youth support and direction in their efforts to gain life skills training, employment and housing. Infinity House, located at 127 Avenue Q South, is a supportive housing facility for Aboriginal women and their children, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Funded by Government of Canada, the Province of Saskatchewan and Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) houses 12 transitional housing units, and three emergency accommodation units. Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company (SNTC) at 228 20th Street West, provides Aboriginal youth in the Circle of Voices program professional theatre training and life skills development, as they prepare and present a live theatre production.

Participants were interviewed at only two sites because fewer than five people were available to participate at Quint Male Youth Lodge. The researcher sought permission to contact youth at Egadz, Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and White Buffalo Youth Lodge. The administrators of these programs responded that youth have been the subjects of many research projects in the past year and are consequently disinterested in participating in yet another research project.

Administrators from IH and SNTC granted permission to the researcher to recruit youth to participate in focus group discussions. The administrators arranged a meeting of tenants of IH and Circle of Voices participants at SNTC. The researcher gave information about the research and invited youth to attend a focus group at an appointed

time. A poster was displayed at Infinity House giving information about the study and announcing an information meeting. At the meetings of the youth at the respective sites, the researcher presented information about the research project and distributed an Information Letter Guidelines for Participant Consent, Focus Group Participant Consent Forms and Parent/Guardian Consent Forms. The researcher stressed that participation is optional and not a requirement for accessing services at the respective programs. The date and time of the focus group discussions was announced and interested participants were invited to attend. An elder associated with each of the programs was available to meet and talk with the participants after the focus groups discussion. Participants' anonymity and privacy will be protected in the written transcription of the focus group discussion and final report.

Research Methods/procedures:

a) Focus Group Discussion

Focus groups discussions involved between 5-12 youth participants at each of the sites. The discussions lasted from 90 - 120 minutes. The assistant moderator Patricia Gonzalez took notes and operated the tape recorder. The researcher moderated the focus group discussion following a question route. The questions were to elicit information about youth perceptions of 1) Home, 2) What is needed for a home, 3) What is beneficial to the sense of belonging in the city, and 4) What is detrimental to a sense of belonging in the city, and 5) what would make the city a better place for them. At the conclusion of the focus group, the researcher explained that if participants have any questions, wish to review the transcript of the discussion, or feel they may wish not to release the transcript, they are to contact the researcher by the Transcript Release Date of two weeks following the focus group discussion. If the researcher had not heard from participants by the Transcript Release Date, she assumed participants' release of transcripts. If the researcher wished to use direct quotes in the report or other publications she would contact participants to gain their permission to do so. The assistant moderator transcribed the audiotaped discussions. The researcher and research assistant analyze the transcripts for common themes and topics.

b) Demographic Profile questionnaire

Before the focus group discussion, participants were asked to complete a demographic profile questionnaire (Appendix B). The participants' anonymity was protected and the questions were to elicit information about identity, housing, family and life experiences. The purpose was to provide descriptors of the group of participants.

c) Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography of literature published since 2000 and addressing topics relevant to urban Aboriginal youth, housing, Saskatoon and other prairie cities was written by Peter Dodson, research assistant. (Appendix A)

d) Analysis of Data

Following each focus group, the researcher summarized what she had heard the participants say and invited them to add and or clarify information. After the focus group the researcher and the research assistant discussed their impressions of the discussion and identified prominent themes. The research assistant transcribed the discussion and the researcher analyzed the transcripts for common themes, range and depth of discussion. The researcher shuffled the demographic profile questionnaires and tabulated the responses looking for common trends.

The discussion and the questionnaire responses highlighted youth perceptions that the researcher had not anticipated. Themes that were repeated often related to family, collective and individual identity, and home as a place of belonging that meets the particular maturation needs of people in the youth stage of life. Youth talked about safety, stability, social network of family and community, nourishment of body and soul, education and training to be independent and resourceful, The researcher organized these themes by topics of Identity, Protection, Nourishment, Training, and Nurture.

Review of Findings

This project, “The City as Home: Sense of Belonging among Aboriginal Youth in Saskatoon” was designed to solicit urban Aboriginal youths’ perceptions of the requisites of a space worthy of being called home. The researcher assumed that youths’ sense of belonging would relate to home as a physical, social and emotional reality and anticipated they would describe their actual and ideal domicile, neighbourhood and community in expressing their sense of belonging. In fact the youth focused a sense of belonging that was primarily in the social sphere and secondarily in the physical sphere.

Demographic Profile of Participants

Age

The participants in the focus groups ranged in age between 18 and 27 years old².

Sixteen participants, 9 male and 7 female participated in the focus groups. The men ranged in age from 19 to 26 with a median age of 21 years. The women ranged in age from 18 to 27 with a median age of 24 years. A factor in the older age range may be the selection criteria of involvement in programs to assist in skills training and or housing. Participants’ maturity and life experiences contributed to the richness of their discussion.

Education

Participants’ level of education ranged from completion of grade 8 to studying at a university undergraduate level. On average, male youth participants had completed more years of schooling. Male participants attained a higher level of education with a median of grade 12, while female participants achieved a median of grade 10. However female family members were identified as the person with the most education in their families by

² Two participants, aged 30 and 39 years, joined the focus groups. Although these participants’ life experiences and their ongoing efforts to establish themselves in the social and working world are consistent with the struggles and aspirations of youth, their age excludes them from the definitions of youth that extend to 29 years of age. Nonetheless these participants made significant contributions to the discussions by sharing their insight and experience. Their example reminded the researcher that the arbitrary age range of the youth category excludes people who could benefit from the support offered to help achieve education and employment goals.

11 participants, compared to male relatives identified as the most educated by 5 participants. In reporting the highest level of education in their family, 2 participants reported a university graduate degree, 6 participants reported a university undergraduate degree, 6 participants reported grade 12 and one participant reported grade 11. Participants consistently expressed the value they place on education. When one participant expressed a sense of defeat by the rules that said she was too old to attend high school without paying for each course, other participants encouragingly shared their knowledge of alternative ways to achieve high school level and gain entrance to college programs.

Residence and Mobility

The questionnaire had a number of questions about residence, mobility and homelessness. The answers to the questions related the research sample to the general trends identified by census records. Six of the sixteen participants reported living in the city only. Ten participants in addition to living in the city had lived in a variety of rural settings: 3 participants reported living on reserve and in the country; 5 participants had lived on reserve and in a small town; and, 2 participants had lived in the bush. Female participants had a shorter median average stay in all types of domiciles. Women's average stay in an apartment was 1 year; men's was 2 years. Women's average stay in a house was 4 years; men's (8 respondents) was 10 years. Women's (3 respondents) average stay in a shelter was 3 days, and men's (2 respondents) was 6 months. Five of the sixteen participants reported they had lived on the street for varying lengths of time: 1 reported she had lived on the street for 1 night; 2 had lived on the street for a couple of weeks; and, 2 had lived on the street longer than a month.

In discussion some participants talked about having more than one home, meaning they live with one relative for a time and then stay with another for an extended period. The literature refers to this as invisible homelessness, yet the youth view it in the most positive of terms of social network and family bonds. They expressed the instability of living with people whose lifestyles differ from their own. Other causes of instability are

high rent, wanting to escape a dangerous neighbourhood, and conflict exacerbated by alcohol and drug use.

Health Determinants

Tobacco use in the past year was reported by 15 of the 16 participants, alcohol use in the past year was reported by 13 of 16 participants and drug use in the past year was reported by 10 of the 16 participants. This is consistent with Census Canada reporting of youths' tobacco smoking. It is noteworthy that in the past year 22% of the males and 11% of the females had not used alcohol, and 66% of males and 11% of the females had not used drugs. Fifteen participants responded that drugs or alcohol had affected some aspect of their lives. Thirteen participants selected "Yes" to the question "does anyone in your family have a problem with drugs". The participants expressed repeatedly the value and importance of sobriety when referring to their young adult lives but also to their childhood memories of when times were bad and when things turned around for the better. The participants' commitment to making the effort to improve their situations is evidenced by their level of sobriety, interest in learning traditional teachings about self-care, and their participation in the programs to develop their skills and independence.

Experience of Gangs

In response to the question of how gangs had affected them: Four (2 male and 2 female) participants selected the response that gangs had affected them in no way. Three male participants selected responses to indicate gangs had affected them in positive ways: by giving them someone they could depend on (2 participants); connecting them with people (2 participants); and, adding to their Native identity (1 participant). Ten participants selected responses to indicate gangs had affected them in negative ways: by violence towards them (4 male participants, 1 female participant); violence towards a relative (4 male participants, 2 female participants); and violence towards a friend (4 male participants, 3 female participants). Participants had experienced intimidation by gangs (2 male participants, 3 female participants). Two participants were affected by committing crime. And one participant (who had also selected positive ways that gangs had affected him) added the note that gangs had blinded him of his identity. For this

group, a large majority experienced the negative impact of gangs. Male participants were, more often than female participants, the target of gang violence and gang activity. The mothers in the groups expressed great concern of the real danger their sons face beginning at a very young age. One young mother reported her seven-year-old son had already been approached numerous times to join a gang. Mothers worry about choosing a good neighbourhood and school, fearing their children are vulnerable to swarming, intimidation and gang initiation.

Perception of economic status

The participants were characteristically optimistic about their economic status. To the statement “When I was growing up I thought my family was...” 4 participants selected “poor we didn’t have what we needed”, 8 participants selected “doing okay, not poor but working hard to get what we needed, 4 participants selected “doing good, not rich but we could easily get what we needed”. To the statement “Right now I think I am...” 14 participants selected “doing okay, not poor but working hard to get what I need”, 2 participants selected “doing good, not rich but I can easily get what I need”. No participant selected the response “poor, I don’t have what I need”. These responses suggest that well-being has more to do with social networks than material possessions.

Identity

Often, when Native people meet, the questions exchanged in getting to know each other include, “Where are you from?” and “Who is your grandmother/grandfather”? This sense of belonging is not about a physical place of birth, but of belonging to a social network. Participants in talking about their sense of belonging identified their extended families, reserve communities, friends and social network in the city. Aboriginal identities are complex in the city because the various situations, audiences and purposes demanding self-identification presuppose an individual will identify with the required categories of people that may be legal, constitutional, linguistic, cultural, or historical.

The participants’ answers on the questionnaire confirmed the researcher’s idea that identity may be variously defined by an individual him/herself, and by outsiders. In identifying their roots, 9 participants identified ancestors from a single Aboriginal group,

7 participants identified ancestors from multiple Aboriginal groups, and 1 participant identified ancestors from European and African groups. To the question “Which group is/are the most important to you”, 11 participants identified a single Aboriginal group and 5 identified more than one Aboriginal group. This supports the discrepancy of the census numbers of people of Aboriginal origin and the number of people with Aboriginal identity. To the question of how the Canadian government recognizes them, 8 participants selected “First Nations”, 3 selected “Métis”, and 1 selected “Non-status Indian”. A person’s sense of him/herself is in part formed by knowledge of one’s ancestral heritage, but it is also formed by aligning oneself with a significant group or groups. Nonetheless, the power of outsider ascription can disregard, overshadow, or distort a person’s individual self-identity. Evidence of the uneasy coexistence of insider and outsider ascription was in the contrast of the participants carefully describing in detail who they are and then unequivocally checking the box next to the government’s designation of a single legal definition of their identity.

The participants’ identity is defined by their sense of belonging to a collective. This at times is an uneasy fit for people who belong to more than one group of people. The self-doubt, exclusion, rejection and dismissal are powerful threats to a youth’s self-concept as they negotiate their relationships with the multiple groups in the city.

Belonging

A sense of belonging develops out of one’s sense of relationship to a collective. Belonging is strengthened when the individual engages in activity that builds reciprocal relationships. Kindness, sharing, and selfless labour strengthen the family and community ties that bind the group together. The questionnaire and the participants’ discussion, which highlighted the important social relationships in Aboriginal families and communities, suggested to the researcher that the Aboriginal concept of family is not understood or appreciated by mainstream institutions. Helping family and friends, caring for children, and providing a haven for relatives are examples of the principle of sharing that defines people’s belonging to a group. But viewed from outside the culture, this help is sometimes misconstrued as dependence and dysfunction. A hopeful sign of change is in the expanded definition of family in the 2001 census. Previously a significant number

of children had been classified as "non-family persons". Changes in the census definition takes into account three-generation households, and caregivers who are relatives other than parents.

The questionnaire revealed bonds of relatedness in family and community. The youth's answers on the questionnaire and their discussion in focus groups suggests the family extends beyond the nuclear unit of 2 generations – parents and children. Family and belonging is much broader. An example of this is in the youth's completion of the statement "In my family the person who has the most education is my _____ who finished grade _____". Because the focus of the research is on "youth's sense of belonging", it would have been no surprise if the participants had named someone from their sibling age group to finish the statement. Instead, 9 of 16 participants identified relatives a generation older than themselves and once removed.

Another indication of the ties of family is the participants' caregivers from ages 0 to 16. Four participants lived in two-parent households for their first 16 years. Five participants never lived with their father. Two participants never lived with either their mother or father. Eleven participants reported living with between 2 to 6 caregivers for periods between 6 months and 16 years. Family members who cared for them included grandparents, aunt/uncle, adult sister, adult brother, stepparent, other relatives and foster parents. Bonds of relatedness are shown in participants' answer to the question "Tomorrow, if I were having serious trouble, whom could I count on for help?" Twelve participants selected "friends", 12 selected "sister/brother", 11 selected mother, 8 selected elder, 7 selected girlfriend/boyfriend, 6 selected father, 5 selected aunt/uncle, 4 selected cousin, 3 selected counselor, 2 selected grandparents, 1 selected step-parent. This suggests that youth's bonds of belonging and relatedness were nurtured by relatives who cared for them for varying lengths of time. The sense of belonging of Aboriginal youth in Saskatoon depends upon the strength of their social network of family, friends and community kinship.

Participants described home, a place of belonging, principally as a social and emotional environment. The researcher discerned the youth conceived of home as a community first, a neighbourhood second and a physical structure last. The researcher identified four key aspects of home as a place of belonging that contributes to youth's self-knowledge, and self-actualization. These are protection, nourishment, training, and nurture.

Home is where one is protected

In the research there were two scenarios and an image that captures the essence of this report. The first was sketched by a young woman who described her basement suite apartment and the danger that has made the bars on the windows necessary. She talked of how she feels so locked up, how it gets so stuffy in the summertime, and how she would like to push out the windows to get some fresh air. In another focus group a young mother spoke quietly of how she had recently moved away from a place that held many dangers for her children. Because of the dirty needles in the park, she never let her children play outside unless she went with them. The final defining image was of a participant's adolescent son, walking on a Saturday morning in September. The remarkable thing was that as he was walking on the median on 22nd Street in the middle of six lanes of traffic, he was reading a book. These candid images indicate that the urban environment is not providing an adequate solution for Aboriginal youths' needs of the city as home. Fundamental issues of safety reverberated in the discussions.

Safety within the family is a concern. Violations of the security and harmony of family relationships are closely tied to alcohol and drug use. Participants spoke of childhood experiences of the chaos and drama when drinking went on in their homes. Participants said life was better when their parents quit drinking and that there are conflicts and trouble when people in the home are drinking. Participants expressed that the ideal situation is sobriety within in the family and neighbourhood. Youth need a place where they can live with stability, without an authority judging their lifestyle and evicting them. Participants talked about the need to have people respect their space, not to use it as a shelter for people who are transient or needing a party place. One participant made an

oblique reference to escaping from a violent boyfriend and protecting her children. She talked about the need to learn non-violent resolutions of disagreements.

All participants expressed concern about safety in the neighbourhood. The physical environment contributes to the danger for youth and children. Specifically participants identified the following as typical danger zones to be avoided: run down buildings; too few or burnt-out street lights; idle kids unsupervised, hanging out in groups and vulnerable to gang initiation; dirty needles littering the ground; sex trade workers; far too easy access to drugs; and, police don't and can't protect them in every situation they face. The participants talked about how frightening the youth gangs are. They spoke of how the gang members are ruthless, and have no fear of consequences. The questionnaire indicated that even these participants who are striving for stability, health, education, and employment experience first-hand the violence of poverty.

The ideal environment is a place where parents and children can spend time together. A neighbourhood would have free programs year-round to involve the children and youth in sports, cultural activities, tournaments and competitions. There would be parks with walking and jogging paths. Streets would be in good repair and well-lit at night. Housing would be affordable. Private and rental properties would be maintained and clean. Youth would be safe and not targeted by predators and gang intimidation. Pawn shops, liquor stores, pornography shops would be absent from the neighbourhood.

Home is where one is nourished

In the sense of home as a place of belonging, nourishment is for physical, social and emotional well-being and strength. An individual who is nourished in these aspects of his or her being is taught to be resourceful and independent. The physical environment may be constructed to nourish youth. An ideal environment would have services in the neighbourhood such as schools, day care, preschool, grocery store, doctors' and dentists' offices, library, community centre, access to counselors and traditional healers and elders. Education should prepare youth to be involved in work that enables them to support

themselves and their children. Education and work experience should give youth the opportunity to develop their competence as young adults. There need to be good role models of people who are independent and resourceful, and who are willing to help youth find opportunities to work and apply their skills. A place of belonging is where one is nurtured to fulfill one's purpose.

There appears to be two significant differences for male and female participants in this aspect of their individual and social growth. Males are more vulnerable to be targeted by gang activity. They reported more frequently violence directed towards them and being approached or initiated by gangs. The danger for males is physical injury or incarceration that would derail their efforts to achieve their goals. Females were less frequently targeted for gang violence. Young women in the groups often spoke of their role of mother. This suggests that this role provides coherence to their social relationships and their purpose of nurturing and protecting their children. However young parenthood is often the reason for interrupting school completion and has a negative effect on the young woman's options and opportunities.

Home is where one is nurtured for physical and inner well-being

Participants described physical, emotional and spiritual wellness and stressed the importance of Elders and counselors who can offer traditional teachings for children, youth and young parents. Participants talked about the Elders at the Saskatchewan Native Theatre and how they as youth had an opportunity to work with the Elders and have meaningful interaction with them. The Elders helped them in their decision-making. Some participants mentioned that for some youth, traditional ceremonies and beliefs are not that important to them until they are in a crisis situation. But all participants spoke of the value of having traditional people as part of the community and in their programs. Although one person spoke of cultural boot camp to save youth by withdrawing them from a poisonous environment, other participants disagreed saying that people have to come to cultural beliefs and practices on their own.

Recommendations

For youth to achieve their full potential, the city planners and policy makers should incorporate the idea of the city as home, where it is a social, spiritual and physical environment that provides a place of belonging. The recommendations for policy changes and increased funding and programs have a greater chance of success if the youth have an active role in redefining the cityscape, where they may challenge their limits and test their mettle.

Physical Environment

The physical environment needs to be safe. It must provide for the maintenance of social relationships. The concept of family, and neighbours should contribute to building spaces where there is opportunity to interact, work together and support each other. It needs to be clean and have services that contribute to the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Social Environment

The social environment needs to provide support systems, and community programs. It would provide an opportunity for youth to lean and be active in relationships with community members, elders, children, and adults. It should provide an opportunity for youth to learn practical skills. A family treatment program for substance and alcohol addiction would contribute to the social wellness of family and community.

Spiritual Environment

Involvement with Elders should be meaningful activity wherein Elders help youth to learn and test their potential. There needs to be spaces for ceremonies such as socials, feast, and round dances.

Recommendations for further research

1. It is noteworthy that female participants reported having between fewer social supports (between 1 and 5 people) than male participants reported (between 2 and 10

people). This merits further inquiry in future research to understand the gender difference.

2. The role of men in Aboriginal communities is a topic worth exploring. Of interest would be how young men are socialized to masculinity and relationships. This could provide insight into the prevention young men's alienation and help to find alternatives to test their courage.

3. A longitudinal study that examines family planning patterns of Aboriginal youth and how it relates to social and economic status in the short and long term could draw qualitative data to trace changing perceptions from youth to adulthood.

Conclusion

This research concludes that some Aboriginal youth express a view that the urban environment could be improved to better meet Aboriginal youths' needs of the city as home. Aboriginal youth who describe their sense of belonging in a Canadian prairie city give researchers and academics a clue about how a Native perspective might be used to conceptualize remedies to urban poverty and youth alienation. The youths, in defining their needs for survival and self-realization, conceptualize home as a physical, social and spiritual sphere. Home, a place of belonging is where one is protected, where one is nourished and taught to be independent and resourceful. It is where one is trained to fulfill one's purpose for individual and social growth, where one is nurtured for physical and inner well-being. The findings of this research are consistent with the recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (2003) for the establishment of Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres (p.52). Recreational facilities are important. Sports are important. But there needs to be more in the city for youth. More interface, more practice more involvement with meaningful activity that is constructive and that promotes growth in their efforts to test the bounds of their abilities, and expand the horizons of their dreams.

Who have a stake in the development Aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan urban centres? Without exaggeration, it is safe to say all citizens of Saskatchewan. There is a need to challenge the foreboding about the social and economic implications of the growing

Saskatchewan Aboriginal demographic and impending labour shortage. First, seeing Aboriginal youth numbers as a resource rather than a social liability will ease apprehension. Second, understanding that Aboriginal youth desire the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, they wish to be challenged to test their limits and be rewarded and celebrated for their efforts. Thirdly, finding innovative ways to aid youths' self-actualization will free and focus their creativity and passion to achieve. These premises underlie recent academic research that introduces a new view of urbanization and policy responses. There is a move away from a focus on the individual and policy that promotes cultural adaptation of individuals in an urban context. Recent research is moving towards a focus on the development and sustainability of Aboriginal communities and identity within urban centres (Newhouse and Peters, 2002).

This research is significant because it recorded Aboriginal youths' reflections on their relationship with their urban landscape. The youth were forceful in their assertion of their power and capacity to do something significant in the community. Youths' place in the city need not be peripheral and transitional but rather central and permanent.

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Appendix A – Annotated Bibliography

1. Belanger, Y, Barron, L., & McKay-Turnbull, C. (2003). *Urban Aboriginal Youth in Winnipeg: Culture and Identity Formation in Cities*. Heritage Canada.

In this article, Belanger et al look at the socio-cultural influences on urban Aboriginal youth's identity development and culture retention in the city of Winnipeg. As a result of two discussion circles with 20 Aboriginal youth from Winnipeg, the authors concluded that a unique urban Aboriginal identity is being created. Urban Aboriginal youth draw on family and friends, as well as urban resources such as the Internet and other media outlets to develop their identity as Aboriginal people in an urban setting, an identity that they see as different from that of Aboriginal people living on reserves.

2. Canadian Council on Social Development. (2003). *Aboriginal Children in Poverty in Urban Communities: Social Exclusion and the growing racialization of poverty in Canada*. March 19th, 2003.

In this article, the CCSD looks at the growing poverty rates among Aboriginal children in urban areas. Through the use of stats from various sources, the CCSD show that Aboriginal peoples and their children are moving more and more to urban areas where they are faced with higher rates of poverty per capita than any other group in Canada. The CCSD also puts forth an anti-poverty strategy including a need to end homelessness through the building of low-income housing and increased funding to deal with urban Aboriginal children's needs.

3. Canadian Council on Social Development. (2004). *Preventing Crime Through Social Development: Focus on Manitoba and Saskatchewan*. Bulletin No.8, Spring 2004.

This issue of the CCSD's newsletter focuses on initiatives in Saskatchewan and Manitoba that deal with the underlying causes of criminality among youth. The article

looks at some programs that attempt to keep youth out of gangs and in school; a Saskatoon program designed to keep youth prostitutes out of the criminal justice system; a Winnipeg program that provides young single mother's with a place to live and life skills training; and an initiative that uses traditional Aboriginal techniques to get Aboriginal youth out of the gang lifestyle.

4. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2002). *Effects of Urban Aboriginal Residential Mobility*. November 2002.

Through interviews and focus groups with urban Aboriginal people and the social service agencies that serve them, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation looks at the effect that urban residential mobility has on the delivery of social services to Aboriginal people. The study shows that urban Aboriginal people see the problem of mobility differently than do social service organizations do. Whereas Aboriginal people see urban residential mobility as a symptom of a lack of adequate and affordable housing, social service providers see urban Aboriginal residential mobility as an impediment to planning and implementing programs.

5. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2001). *Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness*. July 2001.

The CMHC's Environmental Scan on Youth Homelessness is a comprehensive overview of homeless youth in Canada including a profile, causes of youth homelessness and some initiatives being undertaken to reduce the number of youth homeless. The CMHC prepared this study through interviews with 60 government and social welfare agents and a literature review of youth homelessness in Canada. The study finds that family violence, poverty, a lack of affordable housing and gaps in child welfare programs are the biggest causes of youth homelessness. The study also finds that Aboriginal youth are over-represented in the youth homeless population in urban centers across Canada.

6. Canada Mortgage and Housing. (2002). *Special Studies on 1996 Census Data: Housing Conditions of North American Indian, Métis and Inuit Households in Canada*. September 2002.

By examining 1996 Canada Census Data, the CMHC looks at the housing conditions of Aboriginal people in rural, urban and reserve areas. In general, the study found that Aboriginal people in living in Canada have core housing needs at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal peoples. More specifically, the study found that 33% of Aboriginal peoples living in urban areas have a core housing need, meaning their households fail to meet one of the standards of adequacy, suitability or affordability, and alternative housing would cost those households more than 30% of their monthly income.

7. City of Saskatoon. (2001). *Saskatoon Community Plan for Homelessness and Housing*. Saskatoon.

This community plan is the city of Saskatoon's policy document for how to deal with the homelessness in Saskatoon. The policy examines the causes of homelessness, and proposes short term and long term solutions to the problem. The authors argue that programs and services need to combat the underlying issues of homelessness and that homelessness is the result of a failed social system. The report also identifies a lack of affordable housing and rental properties as a major issue in the fight against homelessness.

8. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2004). *Registered Indian Mobility and Migration: An Analysis of 1996 Census Data*. Canada.

This paper by INAC looks at the mobility and migration rates of Status Indians and examines the belief that the increase in the urban Aboriginal population is due to migration from reserves. Through an examination of Census Data from 1996, the authors discover that the increase in the urban Aboriginal population has been the result of natural means and Bill C-31, which restored Indian status to Indian people

who had unfairly lost it in previous years. The authors also argue that urban Aboriginal people have the highest mobility rates in Canada and that reserves are actually having a net increase in migrants, most of who come from urban areas.

9. Douglas, F., & Hunter, G. (2003). *Saskatchewan Child Poverty Report*. November 2003. University of Regina.

This report looks at the state of child poverty in Saskatchewan 12 years after the federal government promised to end child poverty. The authors argue that child poverty in Saskatchewan has not been eliminated, but in fact increased, leading to impoverished children experiencing more disadvantages including having to live in substandard housing and dangerous neighborhoods. In Saskatchewan, the hardest hit group is urban First Nations children, who have a poverty rate of 55.9%. The article closes with the argument that a re-distribution of wealth and more funding for social services are needed to combat this problem.

10. Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. (2003). *Alter-Natives to Non-Violence Report: Aboriginal Youth Gangs Exploration – a community development process*. July 2003. Saskatoon.

The FSIN undertook this study in order to look at the emerging gang problem in Saskatchewan by hosting six community consultation sessions and a Youth Cultural Camp. The authors argue that the current gang problem is the result of historical inequities and the current solution to the gang problem, one of law enforcement, does not deal with the root cause of the problem and has only lead to many First Nations youth who are not gang members, being stereotyped as such. The report also outlines reasons for at-risk youth joining gangs, such as a need for belonging and an identity.

11. Government of Saskatchewan Inter-government & Aboriginal Affairs. (2001). *A Framework for Co-operation: A Policy Statement*. January 2001.

The policy statement from the Government of Saskatchewan is a summary of talks with urban Aboriginal communities and organizations that focused on the well being of the community and the individual, employment, education and work preparation. The goal of the policy statement is to find ways to increase urban Aboriginal people's participation in urban communities and their economies. The provincial government's policy statement provides a direction for future provincial policies, including those aimed at increasing graduation and workforce participation rates amongst urban Aboriginal peoples.

12. Graham, K and Peters, E. (2002). *Aboriginal Communities and Urban Sustainability*. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

Graham and Peters' article is an examination of how governmental urban policy has been influenced by the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the city. The authors argue that in lieu of the new understanding of the importance of urban centres to Canada's social and economic well-being, and because of Aboriginal peoples importance to urban centers in the west, the federal government must take the lead role in implementing policies for urban Aboriginal people. These policies the authors argue should be equally accessible by all Aboriginal peoples and should be flexible in order to reflect the varying needs of urban Aboriginal peoples.

13. Hanna, K., & Hansen, L. (2004). *Aboriginal People and Housing: an exploration of the perceptions of Saskatoon Habitat for Humanity*. March 2004.

The purpose of Hanna and Hansen's study was to determine how urban Aboriginal peoples perceive Saskatoon Habitat for Humanity (SHFH) and to identify the aspects within SHFH's policies that either restrict or promote Aboriginal peoples from becoming SHFH homeowners. As a result of interviews with housing organizations and their Aboriginal clientele, the study finds that while SHFH is viewed positively by Aboriginal peoples, the lack of Aboriginal applicants to SHFH can be attributed to a lack of Aboriginal peoples on SHFH's Board of Directors, the perception of SHFH

homes as being “white” and “suburban” and some of the criteria for candidacy selection.

14. Hanselman, C. (2001). *Urban Aboriginal People in Western Canada: Realities and Policies*. Calgary: Canada West Foundation, 2001.

Hanselman’s article looks at the socio-economic condition of urban Aboriginal peoples in western Canada’s six largest cities and also examines what policies each level of government has for urban Aboriginal peoples. Hanselman looks at policy documents, socio economic data and other material to determine two things. First, the author argues that urban Aboriginal people in western Canada face harsher socio-economic conditions than other groups and secondly, that while government does have some directed policy to help urban Aboriginal peoples, there are gaps in these policies because no one level of government has been willing to take responsibility for status First Nations in urban centres.

15. Higgett, N., Ristock, J., & Wingert. S. (2003). *Voices From the Margins: Experiences of Street-Involved Youth in Winnipeg. Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance*.

This study looks at youth homelessness, examining how youth get onto the street, what life is like for homeless youth and what can be done to get youth off the street. For this study, the researchers interviewed twelve previously or currently homeless youth from Winnipeg, including five Aboriginal people. The authors argue that youth homelessness is the result of the youths’ alienation from major social institutions such as family, school and child protection agencies. The authors also argue that to help homeless youth, gaps in social services need to be addressed rather than continuing to focus on the youth’s individual problems.

16. Institute of Urban Studies. (2003). *First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study*. March 2003. Interim Report One: Final Draft.

This study was undertaken to determine why Aboriginal people move to Winnipeg, what the satisfaction with their living conditions is and to find out their attitudes towards the services provided them. Through a survey with 525 Aboriginal peoples new to Winnipeg the authors found that majority of Aboriginal migrants were unemployed, young, with no plans for housing and had moved for family, education or employment reasons. The study also found that Aboriginal peoples were unhappy with the cost of housing and the safety of their neighborhoods. Finally, many respondents stated that housing and social services needed to be improved to help with their move to Winnipeg.

17. Maxim, P., White, J. P., Whitehead, P. C., & Beavon, D. (2000). *Patterns of Urban Residential Settlement among Canada's First Nations Communities*. Population Studies Center: University of Western Ontario, November 2000.

This article by Maxim et al uses the 1996 Census Data to examine the residential settlement patterns of urban First Nations people. Namely, the article looks the issues of urban concentration, diversity and the overall socio economic conditions of the areas where First Nations people live. The authors find that First Nations people tend to live in areas with higher unemployment, lower educational attainment and income rates. Furthermore, the study finds that in areas where First Nations people are the majority, other minority groups tend to live there as well whereas members of the dominant groups in society tend to live elsewhere.

18. Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Housing Committee. (2004). *Survey of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Band Members to Support the Design of an Affordable Housing Program*. Bridges and Foundations www.bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca/reports/muskeg_lake_final_report.pdf. Accessed Jan 31, 2005.

Through a survey to Muskeg Lake band members, the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation attempted to gauge the interest in an affordable housing program, and to determine

what their band members saw as ideal for a home and a community. As a result of the survey, the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation found that there was much support for their affordable housing program, that 50% of the respondents already own their own home and those that did not believed that their inability to get a mortgage and debts would hinder them from buying a home.

19. Nimmo, M. (2001). *The "Invisible" Gang Members: A Report on Female Gang Association in Winnipeg*. Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. June 2001.

In this article, Nimmo studies the prevalence of female gang affiliation and its determinants; a topic the author feels has received little attention in the past. As a result of her interviews with 24 Winnipeg area workers who interact with female gang members, Nimmo states that while females join gangs for the same reasons as males do and participate in the same activities, there are no programs designed for females to help them get out of gang life, or prevent them from joining in the first place. Nimmo's study also finds that like male gang members, a high percentage of female gang members are Aboriginal.

20. Peters, E. J., & Wilson, K. (in press) You can make a place for it. Remapping Urban First Nations Spaces of Identities. *Society and Space*.

Peters and Wilson's article challenges the assumption that First Nations culture is tied to reserve land. Based on interviews with 18 Anishinabek men and women from Ontario who have moved to urban areas, the authors argue that First Nations people maintain their connectedness to the land, a central component to Anishinabe culture, in urban areas by carving out their own cultural space, maintaining ties to their home reserves and participating in pan-Indian ceremonies whose common theme is an attachment to Mother Earth.

21. Peters, E. (2002). Aboriginal People in Urban Areas. In *Urban Affairs: Back on the Policy Agenda?* C. Andrew, K. Graham and S. Phillips (Eds.), (pp. 45-70). (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press).

Peters article focuses on how academics have viewed the urbanization of Aboriginal peoples and what the consequences of those views have been. Through an analysis of academic writing about Aboriginal urbanization, the author argues that academics' conventional view that Aboriginal urbanization would be problematic has led to a belief that Aboriginal peoples and urban areas are at odds with each other. Peters also argues that a new view of Aboriginal urbanization is needed, one where Aboriginal people and their cultures are looked at as bolstering urban centres.

22. Save the Children Canada. (2000). *Sacred Lives: Canadian aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Ottawa. Canada.

This study looks at the many aspects of the commercial sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children in Canada through interviews with sexually exploited Aboriginal youth in 22 cities across Canada. The authors find that the unique historical, cultural and economic experience of sexually exploited Aboriginal youth in Canada precludes programs designed for at-risk youth from working for them. The authors argue that the sexually exploited youth themselves need to have a say in the development of the programs and the community at large needs to take responsibility for the social conditions that lead to such a large number of Aboriginal youth being sexually exploited.

23. Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. (2000). *Urban First Nations People without Homes in Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon.

This study looks at homelessness among urban First Nations people in Saskatchewan through a literature review, public forums, personal interviews and community profiles of Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. SIIT argues that the exact number of

urban First Nations homeless people is difficult to ascertain because many are living with family members in over-crowded housing conditions, the hidden homeless. SIIT also states that the reasons for and makeup of the homeless vary, but a lack of affordable housing and the high cost of rental properties in urban areas are two of the main reasons.

24. Schissel, B. (2001). Betting against Youth. *Youth and Society* (32) 4, 473-491.

Schissel's article looks at youth gambling and its relation to socioeconomic marginalization and compares the results along racial and gender lines. Schissel surveyed 2,605 high school youth in Saskatchewan and asked them about their income level, gambling habits and their exposure to at risk activities. Overall, Schissel's study links gambling with youth who come from lower income homes and who are at risk for other destructive behaviors such as substance abuse and who feel disempowered within society. Schissel also argues that gambling is a form of 'regressive taxation' that negatively impacts those that can least afford it, namely non-Aboriginal females and Aboriginal males.

25. Skelton, I. (2002). Residential mobility of Aboriginal single mothers in Winnipeg: An exploratory study of chronic moving. *The Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. 17(2), 127-144.

Skelton's article examines issues related to mobility rates. It includes a literature review, an analysis of the research frameworks used, and an examination of the socioeconomic status and mobility rates of those living in inner city Winnipeg. It analyses reasons why mobility rates are high among the population of single Aboriginal mothers. Through interviews, mobility and census data, as well as existing literature, Skelton offers many conclusions, the most significant being that single Aboriginal women see their high mobility rates as something positive because they see themselves leaving a negative or unsatisfactory situation for something better.

26. Silver, J, Mallett, K, and Simard F.C. (2002). *Aboriginal Education in Winnipeg Inner City Schools*. Winnipeg, Canadian Center for Policy-Alternatives.

Silver et al's article focuses on the school experiences of inner city Aboriginal students. The authors interviewed 47 Aboriginal students, 50 Aboriginal student dropouts, 25 Aboriginal community members and 10 teachers for the study. The authors argue that the Aboriginal students in-school values and experiences are very different from those of their daily life. As a result, Aboriginal students feel marginalized by the educational system and in some cases, decide to leave the system all together. What is needed is a school system that changes to incorporate the values and needs of their Aboriginal students.

27. Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. (2003). *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan For Change*. October 2003. Ottawa: Canada.

This report by the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples looks at the particular issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth and proposes short and long term solutions to help urban Aboriginal youth achieve their goal. The Committee gained data for this project through testimony from Aboriginal youth and other experts and argues that urban Aboriginal youth are the most at risk group in Canadian society and that currently there is not enough youth-specific programming to help them overcome the challenges they face. The Committee makes many recommendations including the creation of urban Aboriginal youth centers and safe houses for those wanting to leave gang life.

28. Statistics Canada. (2002) *The Health of the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Population*. Canada.

In this study, Statistics Canada looked at the 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey to identify the differences in health levels, health behaviours and usage of health care institutions between off-reserve Aboriginal people and their non-

Aboriginal counterparts. Statistics Canada found that compared to non-Aboriginal people, off-reserve Aboriginal people tend to have poorer levels of health, including chronic conditions, depression and conditions that restrict activity. The study found that these poorer levels of health could be attributed to the lower socio-economic conditions of off-reserve Aboriginal people, increased levels of smoking and unemployment, as well as lower levels of educational attainment.

29. Walker, R. (2003). Engaging the urban Aboriginal population in low-cost housing initiatives: Lessons from Winnipeg. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 12(1).

Walker's article examines the reasons why consultations with urban Aboriginal people are needed when urban planners create new low cost housing initiatives. Walker looks at a low cost housing initiative in Winnipeg, as well as existing literature and argues that Aboriginal people need to be involved in the planning of both mainstream and Aboriginal specific low cost housing projects because they have the greatest need for low cost housing. As well, for those programs to be successful they need to reflect Aboriginal people's socio economic situation, culture and their goals of self-determination.

Appendix B – Demographic Profile Questionnaire

The City as Home:

The Sense of Belonging Among Aboriginal Youth in Saskatoon

Instructions:

Use the pen provided to answer the following questions. Do not write your name on this questionnaire. You may refuse to answer any or all of the questions. Position yourself in the room to protect your own and other people's privacy when completing the questionnaire. When you are finished, fold the papers in half and put them in the sealed box next to the researcher.

=====

1. I am Male or Female

2. I am _____ years old.

3. My roots are: (Put a check mark beside all those that apply)

- ◇ Assiniboine ◇ Cree
- ◇ Dene ◇ Dakota
- ◇ Métis ◇ Saulteaux
- ◇ Blackfoot ◇ Other _____

4. Which of the above groups is/are the most important to who you are? _____

5. I am recognized by the Canadian government as:

- ◇ First Nation/Status Indian (Treaty)
- ◇ Métis
- ◇ Non-status Indian
- ◇ Inuit
- ◇ Other _____

6. I have lived: (Put a check mark beside all those that apply).

- ◇ on reserve
- ◇ in the country
- ◇ in the bush
- ◇ in a small town
- ◇ in a city
- ◇ all of the above

7. The longest time I lived in (Put an answer beside all those that apply)
 an apartment was _____
 a house was _____
 a shelter _____
 a custody facility _____
 other _____ was _____
8. I have lived on the street (Check all those that apply)
 never
 1 night a couple of days
 a week a couple of weeks
 a month longer than a month
9. From birth to age 16 the people I lived with were: (Write the number of years beside all those that apply)
 birth mother _____ birth father _____ grandparents _____
 aunt or uncle _____ adult sister _____ adult brother _____
 step-parent _____ other relative _____
 adoptive parents _____ foster parents _____ other _____
10. Tomorrow, if I were having serious trouble, whom could I count on for help?
 (Check all those apply)
 friend(s) boyfriend/girlfriend
 sister(s) brother(s) cousin
 mother father step-parent(s)
 aunt or uncle grandparents elder
 other relative counselor other _____
11. Gangs have affected me; (Check all those that apply)
 in no way
 by giving me people I could count on
 by connecting me with people
 by adding to my Native identity
 by protection
 by violence towards me
 by violence towards a relative
 by violence towards a friend
 by intimidation
 by me doing crime
 other _____

12. Have you used tobacco in the past year?
 No Yes
13. Have you used alcohol in the past year?
 No Yes
14. Have you used mood or mind-altering drugs in the past year?
 No Yes
15. Have drinking of drugs affected any of the following areas of your life. (Check all those that apply)
- friend(s) boyfriend/girlfriend
 - reputation parents
 - physical health money legal
 - self-esteem job
 - all of the above
 - none of the above
16. Does anyone in your family have a problem with drugs or alcohol?
 No yes
17. In my family the person who has the most education is my _____ who finished grade _____.
18. I finished grade _____ in school.
19. When I was growing up I thought my family was
- poor (we didn't have what we needed)
 - doing okay (not poor, but working hard to get what we needed)
 - doing pretty good (not rich, but we could easily get what we needed)
 - rich (we had everything we needed without any worry)
20. Right now I think I am
- poor (I don't have what I need)
 - doing okay (not poor, but working hard to get what I need)
 - doing pretty good (not rich, but I can easily get what I need)
 - rich (I have had everything I need without any worry)

Thank you for answering these questions.

Appendix C – Focus Group Questions

This research is part of Bridges and Foundations. Your ideas about home and community are ideas that could build urban Aboriginal communities that welcome and support youth.

Let's go around the circle and each person will take a turn.

1. Introduce yourself and say something about your home.
2. Imagine going into another community, town or city. What do you look for when you're looking to get settled for the day, or few weeks or months?
3. What do you avoid, or steer away from?
4. When you come into a place what makes you feel comfortable and welcome, like it's a place for you?
5. Let's brain storm on a chart. Start with the word HOME.
What words go with this idea of HOME?
6. Follow up questions using participants' responses. What ideas belong in these four quadrants:

(Physical) Home as a Dwelling
(Social) Home as a place for Friends and Family
(Emotional) Home as comfort
(Spiritual) Home as a place for meditation
7. In each of these quadrants, what is beneficial? What is detrimental?
8. If you could make this city environment a better place for your children, grandchildren, what would you do? What would you keep? Change? Get rid of? Bring in or build?
9. Are traditional ways important to urban youth? What makes it possible to follow traditional ways in the city?
10. Following researcher's summary, "Is there anything that we missed or needs to be clarified?"