From 2005 through to early 2007, the Urban Aboriginal Task Force, a partnership of Aboriginal organizations and government agencies, oversaw community-based research in five urban sites: Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Barrie / Midland / Orillia, and Kenora. Designed to shed new light on on-going struggles and critical new developments taking place in urban Aboriginal communities across the province, the project investigated racism, homelessness, poverty, youth, women, and health, also considering broader concerns of culture and identity, gaps in delivery of services, Elders and long-term care, women and children, access to resources, and assessment of Aboriginal services.

The preparation of the Final Report of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force has been informed by the five site reports. It is our hope that the Final Report will initiate a new wave of positive, cooperative policy, programme, and legislative change aimed at improving the quality of life for all urban Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Additional copies of this report are available for download from www.ofifc.org.
Final Report

DECEMBER 2007

Commissioned by
The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
The Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association
The Ontario Native Women’s Association
The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, 
the Ontario Native Women’s Association, 
and the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association 
thank the following for their support.

Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs 
Ministry of Children and Youth Services 
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care 
Ministry of Community and Social Services 
Statistics Canada

We would like to thank members of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force, 
all members of the Community Advisory Committees 
and members of the Ontario urban Aboriginal community that gave 
generously of their time and expertise to contribute to this study.

Meegwetch.

—Don McCaskill and Kevin Fitzmaurice
Letter of Transmittal  

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The Joint Steering Committee of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) is pleased to present the Final Report of the UATF community research project to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Board of Directors of the Ontario Native Women’s Association, the Board of Directors of the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association, the partner Ministries, and the Ontario Aboriginal community.

In early 2003 the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) was established with the aim exploring the issues facing the urban Aboriginal community in the province of Ontario. The idea was conceived of by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres as a way to follow up on the work done by the original Task Force on the Needs of Native People in an Urban Setting, in 1981. While originally six community research sites were sought, the UATF settled on a final five: Sudbury, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Barrie-Midland, and Kenora. Through ups and downs the UATF has persevered in seeking to explore policy questions from a grassroots, community-based perspective.

The Urban Aboriginal Task Force would like first and foremost to express its gratitude to all the community members who participated in the research and provided us with their input, insight and experience. Without you there would be no way of pushing the policy agenda forward in a constructive way, based on the real needs of the community as you have articulated.

The Urban Aboriginal Task Force equally wishes to thank our researchers for conducting the extensive research required for such a comprehensive approach to the subject of Aboriginal people in an urban setting in each of the research sites.
The *Final Report* is intended to provide support for the development of a strategic approach to resource allocations to address the needs of urban Aboriginal people. The *Final Report* is also intended as a tool for communities, government and other agencies to advance a renewed policy agenda based on a rigorous, community-based understanding of the effects and implications of current policy approaches and legislative frameworks. The Task Force believes this *Report* sheds new light on the on-going struggles and critical new developments taking place in urban Aboriginal communities across the province.

The *Final Report of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force* has been informed by the five site reports. It is our hope that the *Final Report* will initiate a new wave of positive, cooperative policy, programme, and legislative change aimed at improving the quality of life for all urban Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Maracle  
Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres  
on behalf of The Joint Steering Committee, Urban Aboriginal Task Force
The once popular notion of Aboriginal people living in separate, reserved spaces away from non-Aboriginal people in Canadian cities is now being significantly challenged as the majority of Aboriginal people are increasingly choosing to live in urban areas. This trend is not new. It has been occurring slowly over the last 40 years but is only now beginning to attract the attention of the non-Aboriginal population as the urban Aboriginal presence becomes more readily apparent and the shifting of perceptions and the re-focusing of government policy priorities gets underway.

This Final Report of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) is a studied documentation of the urban Aboriginal presence in Ontario. It is based upon two years of community-based research that was jointly initiated by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women’s Association and the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association. The study utilized both quantitative (community survey and Stats Canada Census data) and qualitative (focus groups, plenary sessions and life histories) methodologies. The intent of this report is to provide an insightful analysis of the broad realities of urban Aboriginal life in Ontario—with a focus on the cities of Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia, Sudbury and Kenora—so as to reasonably guide the development of

1 Including both Aboriginal ‘identity’ and ‘ancestry’ responses, Statistics Canada estimates that 56% of all Aboriginal people are living in urban centers. (Siggner, A. 2003. “Urban Aboriginal Populations: An update using 2001 Census Results” in Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples.)

2 The research was overseen by a Task Force composed of a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and federal and provincial governments, as well as Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in each research site. For more information see Chapter 2.
Aboriginal policy and programming at the local, provincial and federal levels. In addition to this Ontario report, substantial reports with recommendations exist for each of the five study sites. Moreover, although this is not a longitudinal study, it does reflect back on the findings of the 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force in order to suggest both the achievements and successes of urban Aboriginal people and their communities and the persistent challenges that they are facing.

Since 1981, many Aboriginal people have overcome significant barriers and have made significant social and economic contributions to urban areas across Ontario. Nonetheless, the findings of the current UATF study indicate that many of the same challenges identified in 1981 remain for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario today. The persistent and serious problem of racism against Aboriginal people was documented in all of the research sites, as were the related challenges of finding affordable housing, securing stable employment, completing high school and postsecondary education, assisting the poor and at risk community member, accessing appropriate healthcare services, and building inclusive, culturally vibrant communities. And so, despite the large number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies that have been formed and have worked hard to address these needs, as well as significant federal and provincial government funding, there remain significant gaps in services for urban Aboriginal people.

**Demographics and mobility patterns**

A key finding in terms of the demographic trends in the five cities under study is that the urban Aboriginal population is young (approximately 45% are under the age of 25) and its numbers are increasing. The fact that urban migration is a long-term trend is reflected in the fact that a significant number of Aboriginal people (16%) have lived in the city for 20 years or more, with 63% indicating that they have lived in their respective cities for five years or more. Having said this, we also found that many Aboriginal people maintain important links to their communities of origin primarily to visit family and friends and for holidays.

The research found that there are a significant number of urban Aboriginal people, particularly women, who are living below the poverty line and this appears related to the fact that there is a large percentage of
single parent families that are mostly headed by women. Education levels are rising (particularly for women who are going back to school later in life) but they remain below those of non-Aboriginal people. Importantly, 53% of community survey respondents indicated having attained some postsecondary education, with 35% having graduated from a postsecondary institution. These success rates in education are contributing to the emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class who have attained a stable economic life in all study sites. There is also a disparity between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern regions of Ontario in terms of levels of education, unemployment rates and income with the North/Northwest region lagging behind the South/Eastern region.

**Culture and identity**

Given the dynamic and interconnected nature of culture, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the respondents spoke of culture in ways that reflected the relationships between culture and race, wealth, and geography. Racial stereotypes suggest both that Aboriginal people do not belong in urban centers and cannot be economically successful without losing some degree of cultural authenticity. And thus, racism (when internalized) creates very real tensions between traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultural forms that functions to divide Aboriginal people by degrees of cultural coherence. More specifically, we are seeing a growing separation between the emerging Aboriginal middle class and the Aboriginal social service community. In particular, the research discovered that Aboriginal social service agencies are supporting cultural programming for their at risk clients with middle class participation declining and increasingly moving away from the Aboriginal community.

UATF respondents also referred to urban Aboriginal culture in very inclusive ways that seemed to capture a diversity of common or everyday experiences such as the importance of family and participating in community events like bingo and hockey tournaments. Traditional cultural practices and the importance of Elders and traditional people and language were also thought to be key cultural expressions that supported strong Aboriginal identities and urban Aboriginal communities in resisting the pressures towards individualism in the city. Moreover, because of the low number of Elders and fluent language speakers in the urban
Aboriginal communities, these areas were identified as in need of specific programming and support, with a view to establishing urban Aboriginal cultural centers in each of the five cities for all Aboriginal residents (including the middle class).

**Service delivery to urban Aboriginal people**

Since the 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force, Ontario has seen a significant growth in the number of urban Aboriginal social service organizations. Aboriginal agencies are perceived as providing more culturally-based programs, being more accountable to the Aboriginal community, and are preferred by a majority of urban Aboriginal people over mainstream agencies.

Despite the focus on the provision of essential social services, it is the organizational engagement with Aboriginal culture that distinguishes these agencies from their non-Aboriginal counterparts. That is, efforts are generally made to have traditional Aboriginal culture expressed in such areas as: staff-client relations, staff interaction, the organization’s “cultural ethos,” the decision-making process, linkages with the larger urban Aboriginal community, and within the service delivery approach. This approach appears to resonate with the community as a significant number of community survey respondents (66%) choose to access Aboriginal agencies, and of those, 86% reported being satisfied with the services provided.

There is a widely held perception among Executive Directors of urban Aboriginal agencies that their organizations are not funded at the same level as non-Aboriginal agencies and that they do not have the same degree of long-term, core funding stability. Many Executive Directors of Aboriginal and mainstream organizations alike stressed the desirability of working together to ensure increased coordination of their service delivery to Aboriginal clients. It was recognized that increased cooperation and coordination would help to reduce the duplication of services and allow for more effective system delivery to better meet client needs.

There was also articulation of the need for the three levels of government to sort out the jurisdictional wrangling that currently exists regarding responsibility for services for urban Aboriginal people.
And lastly, there is the wide (75%) perception of existing gaps in services (general lack of funding and programming) for urban Aboriginal people. Interestingly, this was most notably (93%) expressed with those earning $40,000 and $60,000 which again suggests the need for increased cultural programming to the emerging middle class.

**Racism and Aboriginal people in cities**

A significant majority (78%) of respondents indicated racism as a problem for urban Aboriginal people. Moreover, we see from the other areas of study that racism permeates into all aspects of people’s lives to foster discrimination in a systemic way. For example, many respondents spoke of experiencing racial discrimination from landlords when looking for affordable housing, from employers upon first encounters in the interview process, in shopping malls and restaurants when using Status cards, by the police in public spaces and in the schools when being faced by a bully, or a teacher suggesting a disability test or demanding zero tolerance for aggression. Racism against Aboriginal people in Ontario is therefore widespread and systemic in that it functions effectively on many fronts to keep the poorer members of the Aboriginal community from achieving an adequate quality of life in the city.

Fifty percent of respondents indicated that racism also occurs between Aboriginal people. This type of discrimination is complex and appears to revolve around questions of internal competition for racial as well as other forms of social merit and power. As previously discussed, it can take the form of a perceived claim to racial and cultural authenticity so as to exclude the economically successful urban Aboriginal middle class away from the social service community and its many clients. Respondents recounted experiences of internal racism on the basis of whether one has Status or not, whether one is “traditional” culturally, and/or whether one has links to a First Nation community. Internal racism can also intersect with gender to discriminate against Aboriginal women on the basis of their ‘Bill C-31’ Status.

Importantly, there was little awareness of antiracism initiatives in the five cities; although it was generally believed that antiracism education and activism were a benefit to the urban community.
Urban Aboriginal people and health

When discussing the health issues of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario, it is essential to first note that the majority of Aboriginal respondents perceive health in a much broader manner than traditional Western indicators. For example, participants reported alcohol abuse, unemployment, and family violence as the top three health problems facing Aboriginal people.

In terms of frequency of access, the majority of community survey respondents (80%) had visited a health professional in the past 12 months. However, in terms of quality of access, participants indicated walk-in clinics and emergency rooms to be their main sources of health care. A minority of respondents had a family physical or accessed health care in a doctor’s office. These findings correlate well with those that further indicate that addictions, mental illness, violence and abusive relations, sexual abuse, and issues surrounding suicide are not being adequately met in the five cities, those illnesses requiring long-term, continuous care not available through emergency rooms and clinics.

In addition, it is important to note that 74% of community survey respondents prefer to access health services from Aboriginal agencies. Moreover, a significant number (57%) access a traditional healer to meet their healing/wellness needs. This is a noteworthy finding as it indicates that Elders continue to be a common and important aspect of health care for urban Aboriginal people and it points to a need to recognize and support these practices.

And lastly, although we did find conflicting evidence on the question of whether or not the general health needs of urban Aboriginal people were being met (71% of community survey respondents reporting yes, while 55% of Executive Directors indicating no), a significant majority (83%) of community survey participants did rate their overall health as being good to excellent.

Urban Aboriginal youth

In terms of the issues relating to urban Aboriginal youth in Ontario, respondents focused on the many interrelated challenges that youth are facing. Community survey participants cited three major challenges for urban Aboriginal youth; the difficulties associated with fostering posi-
tive Aboriginal identities in the city, the lack of employment opportunities, and having to quit school before graduation. Respondents also pointed to the lack of a culturally relevant school curriculum and racism as factors contributing to poor motivation for some students to remain in school.

Community survey respondents indicated that there is a general lack of funding and programming for urban Aboriginal youth in Ontario. Ongoing problems with addictions, mental health concerns and the related reality of youth suicide were also identified as important, as well as interconnected challenges for urban Aboriginal youth. There was also mention of a lack of positive cultural, recreational and social activities for Aboriginal youth to engage in, resulting in more negative pursuits such as gang membership and drug abuse among urban Aboriginal youth. There are also very few employment training programs leading to opportunities for youth to successfully enter the labour market. It was reported that Aboriginal youth also do not have sufficient cultural or recreational facilities to meet their needs or have an effective “voice” in the urban Aboriginal community. Given that youth are a significant percentage of the urban Aboriginal population, addressing their unmet needs and helping them to become balanced, contributing members of the community will be a huge challenge that will involve cultural, educational, social, and employment initiatives that go beyond those currently available to them.

**Housing**

In spite of social and economic difference between respondents, urban Aboriginal people continue to face significant challenges in housing. For those experiencing poverty, the issue of housing is one of the most immediate and pressing needs they have while for those who have financial stability, the security of home ownership has generally remained elusive. Thus, stable and affordable housing has been found to be a persistent and unmet need that must be seen as a high priority—particularly for those with lower socio-economic standing who are more susceptible to the realities of racism and sexism.

Community survey respondents reported a variety of housing needs, with affordable housing identified as the most pressing. Following this
and in descending order, the following needs were also reported: subsidized housing; housing for the elderly; transitional housing for both men and women; and incentives such as low-interest loans for urban Aboriginal people looking to become homeowners. Participants further indicated the problems of long waiting lists for subsidized housing and the importance of priority housing programs (safe housing) for those youth and women most at risk.

Lastly, housing that integrates a diversity of support services is required for those at-risk members of the urban Aboriginal community such as seniors, youth, single mothers and those with disabilities. It is important to note that the Urban Aboriginal Homeless Initiative (UAHI) in Sudbury, through the coordination of a diversity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services such as life skills coaching, employment counseling, cultural teaching, transportation, and health workshops, has been successful in finding housing for 350 clients over the last five years with only three of its original clients remaining on the street.

Income levels, rates of poverty, and employment

When considering income levels and rates of poverty for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario over time, it is critical to note that in spite of the emergence of an Aboriginal middle class, poverty continues to be a major concern for the majority of Aboriginal people living in the city. The 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force found that, although Aboriginal people cited employment as a reason for migrating to the city, their income levels were below those of the non-Aboriginal population. Twenty-five years later we find similar results as the majority of participants in the current UATF study continue to report annual incomes under $20,000.

In terms of the Statistics Canada marker of poverty (the Low Income Cut off Point: LICO), we see that more urban Aboriginal people are living under the LICO than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This disparity is most notable in Thunder Bay where half of Aboriginal children are living below the LICO as compared to only 14% of the non-Aboriginal children, and in Kenora where across all age groups the disparity between levels of poverty is the greatest, as 26% of Aboriginal people live under the LICO compared to only 7% of non-Aboriginal people.
In terms of employment, there are significantly higher unemployment rates for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people in all of the five cities. Moreover, these statistics reiterate the economic disparity that exists between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern Ontario. In addition, Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have the highest unemployment rates of all urban Aboriginal people across Ontario.

It is further essential to note the key role played by volunteers in the urban Aboriginal community. Although they are not being paid for their labour, a significant number (50%) of community survey respondents reported having voluntarily helped out in community events such as pow wows, feasts, and socials. This work greatly contributes to the building and maintenance of the community.

Urban Aboriginal women

In terms of the experiences of urban Aboriginal women in Ontario, this report presents on the many, often challenging accounts shared by research participants. In focus groups and key informant interviews, many women shared stories of frustration and anger in attempting to meet their most basic needs and those of their children, often without the help of husbands and fathers. They spoke of the difficulties in accessing a minimum level of services for food and safety from violence, as well as for assistance in coping with mental illness and addictions.

There are emergency services for those women deemed most at risk, however, these services tend to focus on the immediate crisis at hand, and not on the longer-term and integrative care requirements necessary to end established patterns of violence, abuse, prostitution, and drug addiction. Often women are most vulnerable upon leaving a program without the essential supports to begin building a new life.

While urban Aboriginal women are experiencing severe forms of oppression, they are also working hard to cultivate community, support each other, and to foster better lives for themselves. Aboriginal women are both the most prominent volunteers in the cities and are most likely to occupy staff and Executive Director positions in urban Aboriginal organizations. They are therefore occupying a dual role in their communities. They are both the most severely exploited and vulnerable members of the
community with the most needs, and they are also the most active and influential in working to end that oppression.

As a necessity for helping women to succeed in the urban center, many participants spoke about the need for more effective efforts to end violence against women and to better support extensive childcare services. Moreover, many participants spoke about the effectiveness of traditional teachings and Elder counselling in providing the tools necessary to emerge from feelings of alienation and despair towards leading healthy and productive lives as contributing members to their communities and the city at large. These participants spoke specifically about the need for more access to Elders and traditional cultural activities, and for the development of Aboriginal cultural centres.

The emerging urban Aboriginal middle class

One of the more promising findings from this study was that many urban Aboriginal people are experiencing significant levels of economic success and prosperity. The community survey findings indicated that 25% of the local Aboriginal population is earning over $40,000 per year and 12% is earning over $60,000 per year. These findings therefore suggest the emergence of an economically successful, Aboriginal middle class in Ontario cities.

Before outlining some of the general characteristics of this segment of the urban Aboriginal population, it is important to first note that given our ‘snow ball’ sampling technique it was very difficult to reach those middle class urban Aboriginal people working outside of the social services network and when we were able to contact them, they often declined to participate in the study. Thus, we suspect that this group of economically successful persons is underrepresented in our findings.

Overall, the urban Aboriginal middle class as represented in this research is feeling disconnected from the urban Aboriginal community as it looks to participate in cultural practices and events. They expressed a need to expand upon the existing programming emphasis on social services for high risk community members to include the broader institutional support for the cultural needs of the wider urban Aboriginal community. More specifically, they spoke of a desire for cultural centres and alternative cultural schools that could house language and cul-
tural instruction for their children, Elder-in-residence programs, socials, feasts, and traditional teaching opportunities, as well as a diversity of other cultural activities.

Lastly, it is important to note that those economically successful urban Aboriginal people that occupy the upper income bracket of more than $60,000 per year indicated that they experience racism from other Aboriginal people most frequently. Given the resentment that this finding suggests it will perhaps be difficult to reach out to both the clients of Aboriginal social service organizations as well as the more affluent community members. It will be important to develop institutional supports for this segment of the urban Aboriginal community and to integrate them into the community as they possess important skills and experience that can contribute significantly to the Aboriginal community.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) Study is an initiative of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA) and the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA), called the Joint Executive Committee. It is a community-based study of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario locations—Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia, Sudbury and Kenora. This Final Report is one of a set of six Task Force Reports, including Site Final Reports for each of the five research sites. The Site Final Reports contain the findings from each city, along with a set of recommendations designed to address issues facing urban Aboriginal people. The research was overseen by a Task Force composed of a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and federal and provincial governments, as well as Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in each research site. It is anticipated that the Task Force’s work will result in comprehensive and coordinated policy and program initiatives that are developed in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and designed for Aboriginal people in Ontario urban areas.

1.2 The 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force

This research project builds on the original Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting, published in 1981. We believe the original to be the first major research on urban Aboriginal people in Canada. Both the original 1981 Task Force and the current Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) Study were initiated by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC). The 1981 Task Force was a partnership of three Aboriginal organizations (OFIFC, ONWA and OMAA) and five provincial government ministries. The overall goal of the 1981 Task Force was “the improvement
of the quality of life of Native people migrating and residing in urban areas” and to “develop the opportunities and resources whereby they may determine their own future, while adjusting to an urban environment and retaining their cultural identity” (Native People in Urban Settings, p.10). The specific objectives of the 1981 Task Force were to “identify the needs of urban Native people; evaluate available resources; identify resource requirements based on unmet needs; clarify areas of jurisdictional responsibility; and develop a plan to meet identified needs.” To meet these objectives, the 1981 Task Force utilized a number of methodologies in its research including: a literature review; key informant interviews of Native agency staff; a demographic study; and a survey of members of the urban Native community throughout Ontario.

The 1981 Task Force garnered a wealth of data pertaining to a wide variety of topics on urban Native people in 22 cities and towns in Ontario. Some of the key findings include the following:

- major problems in urban areas were related to unemployment, limited education, lack of housing, discrimination, cultural awareness and identity problems, and alcohol abuse;
- problems and resource needs were identified in the judicial and social welfare system, as well as in the areas of recreation, health and nutrition, and the special needs of Native youth, children, families and women;
- a sense of prejudice and discrimination was identified as a barrier to finding employment and housing, as well as within the judicial process and, to some extent, the welfare system; and
- lack of resources was identified as a gap in the provision of services, particularly in the following areas: enhancement of cultural awareness for Native and non-Natives, prevention, crisis intervention and counseling, employment opportunities, day care, Native staff, housing, education, social and recreational opportunities and resources for Native seniors (Native People in Urban Settings, p.92-94).

Some of the proposed solutions included:

- the addition of services, programs and resource opportunities, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, education, and drug and alcohol abuse;
- greater involvement of Native agencies in the provision of programs;
• changes or reinforcement of service orientations or philosophies that emphasize:
  a) enhancement of sensitivity, awareness and responsiveness to Native culture, lifestyle and social situation;
  b) interdependence of needs and problems and holistic approaches to intervention; and
  c) rehabilitation in such areas as justice, social welfare, and drug and alcohol abuse.

• increasing inter-agency coordination in order to produce a truly effective Native service network in each community;

• removal of negative stigma associated with being Native through:
  a) mass media emphasis on positive images;
  b) native involvement in image production; and
  c) government support of programs oriented to non-problem areas of life.

• increased financing (Native People in Urban Settings, p. 94–96).

The 1981 Task Force had a significant impact on the situation of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario, both in terms of policy formation and program development. A great deal has changed, particularly with the emergence of a range of Aboriginal organizations in the 1980’s that were designed to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people. It has been generally noted by senior Executive Directors and staff of Aboriginal organizations that the 1981 Task Force report resulted in increased attention to urban Aboriginal issues, and that heightened awareness of urban problems and the growth of Aboriginal agencies formed to deal with them can at least, in part, be attributed to the 1981 report. For example, the 1981 Task Force reported that there were 14 Native organizations in Thunder Bay in 1981 (Native People in Urban Settings, p. 51); however, there were 33 Aboriginal organizations reported in Thunder Bay in 2004 (Assessment of Human Service Needs in Thunder Bay: Environmental Scan, p. 11). There has also been a significant increase in government funding and programs geared toward urban Aboriginal people since the 1981 Task Force. For example, the federal government estimates that it invests approximately $270 million, directly or indirectly, in approximately 80 urban Aboriginal programs spread across 22 federal departments and agencies (Government of Canada, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, 2006).

The work of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies that assist Aboriginal people in their adjustment to urban life have had numerous
positive effects since the 1981 Task Force. Many Aboriginal people have overcome significant barriers and have become economically successful, contributing members to their urban areas in Ontario. They are now part of an emerging urban Aboriginal middle class.

Despite these significant developments, much has remained the same. The findings of the current UATF Study indicate that many of the issues identified in 1981 remain problems for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario today. Poverty, lack of affordable housing, health care issues, unemployment, lack of education, problems of mental health and addictions, racism and lack of support for Aboriginal cultural and identity are still challenges facing many urban Aboriginal people. Despite the large number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies that have been formed to address these needs, as well as significant federal and provincial government funding, there remain gaps in services and the need for coordination among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies.

1.3 Initial research interest

Despite positive developments since the 1981 Task Force, urban Aboriginal issues remain unaddressed in respect to policy and program development to the extent needed to achieve a substantial and long-lasting impact on the overall quality of life and well-being of the urban Aboriginal community in Ontario. In addition, very few in depth studies pertaining to urban Aboriginal people have been researched. Even the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) devoted only one chapter to the subject in Volume 4 (Government of Canada, RCAP Volume 4, Chapter 7, 1996). Moreover, jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments, among other factors, have resulted in the marginalization of urban Aboriginal people’s issues in government policy and program development at both levels. This is in spite of the fact that over half of Aboriginal people in Ontario currently reside in urban centres.

The Joint Executive Committee, therefore, proposed that a new Task Force on Aboriginal people living in urban centres in Ontario be established. To determine whether there was interest in conducting a study the Joint Executive Committee conducted a feasibility study for the Urban Aboriginal Task Force Research Project in January 2003. The OFIFC funded the study and Don McCaskill did the research. This study culminated in a two-day workshop held at the OFIFC office on May 5th and 6th, 2003. The feasibility
study included a literature review of relevant research pertaining to urban Aboriginal people, and interviews with 35 stakeholders from Aboriginal organizations and provincial and federal government departments.

Virtually all feasibility study participants supported the need for a renewed Urban Aboriginal Task Force Research Project for the following reasons:

- lack of research on the topic;
- large numbers and high visibility of urban Aboriginal people;
- Increasing awareness of challenging social and economic issues and unmet needs of urban Aboriginal people;
- recognition by Aboriginal people and governments that governments could be more effective in addressing these needs;
- government acknowledgement of jurisdictional wrangling and poor coordination of programs and services involving urban Aboriginal people;
- various Aboriginal constituencies’ interest in addressing urban Aboriginal self-government; and
- recognition of the needs of Aboriginal people who are both economically successful, and who wish to participate in Aboriginal cultural and social activities in the city.

As a result of the feasibility study, a proposal to establish an Ontario Urban Aboriginal Task Force Research Project was prepared and submitted by OFIFC to various federal and provincial government departments and ministries. The goals of the research included the following:

- provide a comprehensive picture of the demographics and mobility patterns of Aboriginal people in selected cities in Ontario;
- research a number of specific topics such as: health, social services, culture and identity, racism, women, youth, and unemployment, education and training, and economics, in order to gain an understanding of unmet needs;
- provide an empirical database to inform the development of more effective policies, programs and services for urban Aboriginal people;
- examine the history of urban Aboriginal people, including the shifts since the 1981 Task Force in terms of changing needs and the effectiveness of policies, programs and the provision of services;
• address the roles and responsibilities of different levels of governments for urban Aboriginal people with a view to clarifying issues of jurisdiction and the coordination of policies, programs and services;
• gain an understanding as to how Aboriginal people define themselves in urban centres, including the influence of traditional/cultural factors compared to situational/relationship factors;
• comprehend the nature of the emerging urban Aboriginal middle class with a view to addressing their needs;
• examine the history and current situation of Aboriginal organizations regarding their capacity to deliver programs and services as well as the coordination of services among agencies; and
• make recommendations as to the development of appropriate policies, programs and services to adequately address the needs of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Funding for the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) was received in February 2005. The Task Force has been funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs (formerly the Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs), the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women’s Association. Statistics Canada provided an in-kind contribution with a statistical analysis of the 2001 Census data for each site.

1.4 The Urban Aboriginal Task Force

Aboriginal organizations, federal and provincial government officials came together in partnership to oversee the research as the Urban Aboriginal Task Force in March 2005. The Task Force was comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers
Ontario Native Women’s Association
Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association
Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs (formerly the Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs)
Ministry of Children and Youth Services
The Task Force has met ten times and has overseen the entire research through Phase I: Planning, Phase II: Implementation; and Phase III: Reporting. The Task Force chose five sites to conduct the research: Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia, Sudbury and Kenora. The Task Force also determined the province-wide priorities, topics to be researched and considerations, as shown in Table 1A.

The Task Force chose a community-based research approach and created Community Advisory Committees (CAC) to locally oversee the research in each of the sites. The Task Force also hired a Research Director and Associate Director and decided on the research methodologies for each site, including: literature reviews, key informant interviews, life histories, focus groups, plenary sessions and a community-wide survey. Once the CACs were established, the Task Force met regularly, allowing the CACs to guide the research priorities and directions in a locally appropriate manner. Thus, some research topics are common to all sites while others are unique to individual sites, in keeping with local priorities.

A special effort has been made to take the research back to the people in each of the research sites, through community workshops and other gatherings, to discuss the findings and recommendations contained in the Site Final Reports. In total, the Task Force research involved over 100 representatives from Aboriginal organizations, government departments and ministries to oversee and conduct the research. Thus, the Task Force was truly a community-based research project. It is hoped that the Task Force recommendations resulting from the findings of

1 Toronto was originally chosen as a sixth research site, but because of circumstances beyond the control of the Task Force, community consensus on pursuing the project could not be reached and Toronto was consequently dropped as a site. However, initial research was conducted in Toronto, including: a literature review, two focus groups on employment and economic development, and a plenary session on the urban Aboriginal middle class.
2 It should be noted that the Task Force chose not to include topics related to the issue of First Nations politics in relations to urban Aboriginal people or the issue of urban Aboriginal self-government.
this comprehensive study will lead to significant improvements in urban Aboriginal service delivery and programming that will positively contribute to the quality of life of Aboriginal people living in the cities of Ontario.

1.5 A users guide to this report

This report is structured around specific topics of investigation articulated by the Task Force, such as: demographics, culture and identity, service delivery, youth, women, housing etc. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the Task Force study including its background, goals, mandate and research methodology. Chapter 3 begins the presentation of the findings by providing an overview of the demographics and mobility pattern of the sample including: gender, family characteristics and marital status, education, age, employment and occupations and income, length of residency in the city and links to the community of origin. Chapters 4 to 12 present the study findings in detail organized according to a number of topics including; culture and identity, service delivery, racism, health, youth, housing, rates of poverty and employment, urban Aboriginal women and the emerging middle class. In Chapter 13, the Analysis and

3 A more detailed discussion of the research methodology is contained in Appendix 4. Appendix 2 provides a list of research instruments utilized in the study. Appendix 3 discusses the ethical guidelines for the research.
Conclusions chapter, we have brought all of the findings together to sug-
gest particular trends, conclusions as well as suggest policies, programs
and courses of action to better meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people
in Ontario as a whole and with particular attention to each of the areas
of focus. Chapter 14 is a distillation of the entire report into a series of
overarching recommendations that point to courses of action for urban
Aboriginal people in Ontario; it is a vehicle for guiding the development
of policy and programming at the provincial and federal levels.

Each chapter begins with a brief summary of the main findings.
As each chapter proceeds, more specific detailed findings are then pro-
vided through an incorporation of the community survey data (quantitative)
in the form of figures and tables which are complemented by the
qualitative data (focus group, plenary session, and life history) results
presented as direct quotations from research participants. The key in-
formant interview findings have been included both as direct quota-
tions as well as figures and tables. Moreover, as previously discussed,
Statistics Canada data is also incorporated into many of the chapters
as a way of supplementing the UATF research results. Each chapter is
therefore a blended (triangulated) compilation of both quantitative and
qualitative findings that point to particular conclusions/findings for
each of the areas of study.
2.1 Research design: A balancing of local and provincial community interests

As discussed in the Introduction, the current Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) was a community-based research initiative. Research in the field began formally in the spring of 2005 and ended in January 2007. The Task Force oversaw the research in collaboration with the five local Community Advisory Committees (CACs) of Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia (BMO), Sudbury, and Kenora.

The firm of Mukwa Associates was contracted to undertake the research for all five sites. Mukwa Associates reported regularly to the Task Force and all the CACs throughout the research. The contract for the research set out in its terms and conditions that the material produced as a result of the research agreement is the property of the OFIFC. The senior research staff consisted of Don McCaskill as Research Director and Kevin Fitzmaurice as Research Associate. A protocol on ethics for conducting research in Aboriginal communities was developed and approved by the Task Force and the CACs. The Task Force and the CACs approved all research instruments and assisted in selecting the sample of respondents. The Research Director and Research Associate together with the CACs hired three researchers for each site, as well as a Research Coordinator and two Research Assistants to conduct the research in each of the five sites. The site research staff worked closely with the Research Director and Associate, as well as the local CAC. Aboriginal organizations in each site generously provided offices to conduct the research, as well as space for CAC meetings\(^1\). Upon completion

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1 In Thunder Bay, the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre and Anishnawbe Mushkiki Thunder Bay Community Health Centre; in Ottawa, the Odawa Native Friendship Centre; in Barrie/Midland/Orillia, the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle; in Sudbury, the N’Swakamok Native Friendship Centre; in Kenora, the Ne’Chee Native Friendship Centre.
of the data gathering, a team of ten individuals was hired to assist the Research Director and Associate with collating, analyzing and writing up the findings. In addition to this Final Task Force Report, final reports were prepared and published for each of the five sites.

Each of the local CACs met an average of six times, beginning with the first meeting of the Thunder Bay CAC in the fall of 2005 and ending with the last meeting of the Sudbury and Kenora CACs in January 2007. At the local level, each CAC was responsible for hiring the Research Team, consisting of one Research Site Coordinator and two Research Assistants for each site. In all cases, members of the local urban Aboriginal community filled these positions. Importantly, the CACs were also responsible for determining the study design based on local research priorities, developing research methods by creating and vetting research tools, providing strategic sampling for research participants, designating a research office, providing ongoing feedback and amendments to the emergent design of the research, giving feedback on the final report, and assisting in bringing the findings back to the local community. It is important to clearly note that the direction of the CAC members has been critical to the success of this research project.²

In working with the local CAC and Research Teams, the Research Director and the Research Associate sought a general consistency of method across the province, and efforts were made to balance local and province-wide Task Force research interests, although, some research topics remained unique to particular sites. Ultimately, a common (triangulated) method was applied to each of the five sites that incorporated elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

More specifically, each of the five sites conducted a broad-based community survey (quantitative) consisting of a questionnaire with primarily closed-ended questions, which was distributed to a large sample of the urban Aboriginal community. In addition, the following qualitative research instruments were used in each of the five sites to solicit more detailed and in-depth information from the respondents as a way of complementing the quantitative data:

1. Key Informant Interviews
2. Life Histories
3. Focus Groups
4. Plenary Sessions

² See Appendix 1 for a complete list of CAC participants as well as the local Research Teams for each of the five sites.
Importantly, there was further balancing of local and provincial research interests in terms of specific areas of inquiry and questions asked. Consequently, as noted in each of the following chapters, some questions and their corresponding tables and figures are common to all research sites while others are only common to two or three sites. This speaks to the complexity of undertaking this kind of community-based research, as well as to the importance placed on certain lines of questioning for specific urban Aboriginal communities. *Table 2A* outlines the local research topics for each of the five sites.

**Table 2A  Quantitative and qualitative research topics per city**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research topics</th>
<th>Thunder Bay</th>
<th>Ottawa</th>
<th>BMO</th>
<th>Sudbury</th>
<th>Kenora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and homelessness</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaps in services</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal organizations</td>
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<td>Mental health</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Poverty</td>
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<td>Men</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential school effects</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Local data collection summary

Primarily, the local Research Team conducted the research and gathered the data. The Research Site Coordinator and the two Research Assistants worked together to facilitate and record the focus groups and plenary sessions, while designated members of the Research Team conducted key informant interviews. In each of the sites, the Research Director and Associate participated in several of the qualitative research activities as a way of gaining familiarity with the local context. Participants in the qualitative research were initially identified by the local CAC and Research Teams. Subsequently, the Research Team applied a ‘snow ball sampling’ technique of gathering referrals for additional respondents. Moreover, the Research Team worked collectively in conducting the community survey, which was distributed mainly at local Aboriginal community events as well as to local Aboriginal organizations.

Overall, the Ontario-wide study included a total of 1,773 respondents, of which there were 1,078 community survey respondents, 188 focus group participants, 175 plenary session participants, 24 life histories, and 308 key informant interviews. The research methods and the number of participants are shown in Table 2b.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Thunder Bay</th>
<th>Ottawa</th>
<th>BMO</th>
<th>Sudbury</th>
<th>Kenora</th>
<th>Total per method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key informant interviews</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life history</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plenary sessions</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>259</td>
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<td>340</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more specific information regarding the research methodology, coding and analysis, and ethics please see Appendix 4.

- 695 respondents (39%) participated in the qualitative research.
- 1,078 respondents (61%) participated in the quantitative research.
2.3 **Statistics Canada data**

Over the course of the research period, two employees from Statistics Canada worked closely with the Research Director and Associate to compile relevant data for the five sites. It is important to note that many of the local Community Advisory Committees members stressed the need to interpret Statistics Canada data with caution due to its under-representation of urban Aboriginal people, citing the difficulties of researching the homeless and the more transient members of the community combined with a growing number of Aboriginal people who refuse to participate in Census research. Statistics Canada does acknowledge these limitations as a problem of ‘under-coverage’, which they report to be particularly problematic (for similar reasons mentioned above) when researching Aboriginal populations.³

And so it is with an acknowledgement of the limitations of under-representation/coverage that we have incorporated Statistics Canada data primarily in a way that provides complementary information to areas of research situated outside of the UATF quantitative survey research focus. However, we have occasionally incorporated Statistics Canada data in common areas so as to offer notable points of comparison between the two data sets.

2.4 **Limitations of the study**

There are some notable limitations to this study. Firstly, the community-based methodology and applied research tools of this *Urban Aboriginal Task Force Report* do not correspond directly with those methods and tools used in the 1981 UATF study. As such, in spite of similar areas of focus (health, services, education, employment etc.), it is important to note that this is not a longitudinal study and although we do make specific reference to the 1981 *Task Force Report* findings, the limitations of direct comparability must be highlighted. Secondly, as previously stated within Section 2.1 of this chapter, the uniqueness of some local research topics led to a degree of inconsistency of research tools and methods.

³ For more information on ‘under-coverage and Aboriginal populations see Statistics Canada at: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/canada.cfm>.
across some of the five sites. As a result, not all cities can be compared across all research topics and questions.

Third, the community survey sample was based on ‘snow ball’ sampling techniques involving referrals and cannot be considered a true random or representative sample of the urban Aboriginal populations in the five research sites.

Further, because of the sampling method, the majority of the middle class respondents that we spoke with were part of the local Aboriginal social service network either as Executive Directors, Staff and community. Those middle class, urban Aboriginal people that worked outside of this network were often very difficult to reach as they were no longer part of the social service community. When we were able to contact members from this economically successful segment of the population, they sometimes declined to participate in the study.

Similarly, urban Aboriginal men can be considered to be underrepresented in the study sample. The fact that women make up the staff and volunteers of the majority of urban Aboriginal agencies and that the sample was, to some degree, influenced by this fact led to the over-representation of women in the study. However, an effort was made in the focus groups, plenary sessions and life histories to attain a gender balance.
KEY FINDINGS

- The urban Aboriginal population in the cities included in the current UATF study is growing.
- Aboriginal people are long-term urban residents with a significant number (63%) having lived in the city for five years or more.
- There is a disparity between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern regions of Ontario in terms of levels of education, unemployment rates and income with the North/Northwest region lagging behind the South/Eastern region.
- There are a large percentage of single parent families, mostly headed by women.
- The urban Aboriginal population is young; i.e., a large percentage are under 20 years of age and younger than the urban non-Aboriginal population.
- Education levels of urban Aboriginal people are rising, but is still below those of non-Aboriginal people.
- There are a substantial number of urban Aboriginal people who have attained post-secondary education.
- Many urban Aboriginal people, particularly women, are living below the poverty line.
- Nevertheless, there is an emerging Aboriginal middle class who have attained a stable economic existence in all study sites due to such factors as higher levels of education, better jobs and subsequent increases in incomes.
- Intra- and inter-community mobility rates are high for urban Aboriginal people.
- A significant number of urban Aboriginal people retain links with their community of origin.
There are more Aboriginal people living in urban centres across Canada than on reserves, in Métis settlements and in Inuit communities. Despite the growing number of urban Aboriginal people and the increasing realization that they constitute a permanent presence in urban centres across Canada, little attention has been paid to them and their needs. They remain largely invisible in Canada’s cities. (Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, 1992, p. 7)

3.1 Placing the study in its urban context

The five sites chosen for this study — Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia\(^1\), Sudbury and Kenora — represent a mix of Ontario cities where urban Aboriginal people live. Table 3a shows Aboriginal populations\(^2\) and total populations for each of the cities in the UATF study, based on 2001 Census data\(^3\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Aboriginal population</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>% of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Bay</td>
<td>8205</td>
<td>120,370</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>9160</td>
<td>795,225</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrie/Midland/Orillia</td>
<td>3540</td>
<td>146,325</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudbury</td>
<td>7020</td>
<td>153,510</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenora</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>15,590</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously stated in Chapter 2, many of the local Community Advisory Committee members stressed the need to interpret Statistics

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\(^1\) It should be noted that the 2001 Census data cited in this report includes data from the cities of Barrie and Midland but not Orillia, as Orillia was added as a site in the UATF study after a report on the Census data for Barrie and Midland was prepared. However, the UATF data includes findings from Orillia. Therefore, the reporting of findings for some topics include Orillia and others do not, depending on the origin of the data.

\(^2\) The 2001 Census population figures listed as Aboriginal population use Aboriginal identity population rather than the Aboriginal ancestry population. The Aboriginal identity population refers to those persons who 1) identified with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit and/or 2) have registered Indian Status as defined by the Indian Act, and/or 3) have Band or First Nation membership.

Canada data with caution as it was felt to be under-representative of urban Aboriginal realities due to the difficulties of including the homeless and the more transient members of the community as well as those refusing to participate within census, quantitative research. Given these considerations we have incorporated Statistics Canada primarily in a way that provides complementary information to areas of research situated outside of the UATF quantitative survey research focus. However, we have occasionally incorporated Statistics Canada data in common areas so as to offer notable points of comparison between the two data sets.\(^4\)

Thunder Bay, Kenora and Sudbury are adjacent to First Nations communities, including: Fort William First Nation, the three First Nations communities of Wauzhushk Onigum, Shoal Lake #40, Iskatewizaagegan #39, and Nipissing First Nation and Whitefish Lake First Nation respectively. The city of Ottawa has a complex history when it comes to Aboriginal people. The city is built on the traditional land of the Algonquin people. The closest First Nation community to Ottawa is Golden Lake, otherwise known as the Algonquins of Pikwanagan. Ottawa is also near to Algonquin communities in Quebec, including: Lake Kipawa, Kitigan Zibi, Rapid Lake and Eagle Village First Nations. The Mohawk communities that are close to Ottawa include: Kanesatake, Akwesasne, Kahnawake, Tyendinaga and Doncaster First Nations. Aboriginal people from Northern First Nation communities along the James Bay and Hudson’s Bay coastline, as well as Inuit residents from Nunavut and virtually all parts of Canada, also reside in Ottawa.

With the exception of Kenora, all of the UATF research sites have post-secondary institutes, both colleges and universities. The institutions are shown in Table 3b.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Bay</td>
<td>Confederation College</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Algonquin College</td>
<td>Carleton University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrie, Midland and Orillia</td>
<td>Georgian College (campuses in Barrie and Midland)</td>
<td>Lakehead University (satellite site in Orillia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudbury</td>
<td>Cambrian College</td>
<td>Laurentian University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) It should be noted that the 2006 Census population figures were unavailable at the time of writing of this report.
Because of their close proximity to First Nations communities, the UATF cities with colleges and universities have developed services and programs for Aboriginal students in their institutions. All of these institutional main sites, listed in Table 3b, have Aboriginal student centres or services as well as programs of study with an Aboriginal focus.

Thus, Aboriginal people are living and attending post-secondary institutions in these four cities. Due to the number of First Nations surrounding these cities, and the trend towards Aboriginal people moving into urban centres to pursue post-secondary education, as well as for employment and health reasons, there is potential for the 2006 Census data to show increasing numbers of Aboriginal people in these cities.

In the following sections of this chapter, both the 2001 Census and UATF data will be utilized to provide a demographic snapshot of urban Aboriginal people in the five cities of the study. These cities have vibrant yet often unseen urban Aboriginal communities.

### 3.2 Demographics

The 2001 Census data shows that in all five of the UATF cities, the Aboriginal population is substantially younger than the non-Aboriginal population and the overall Aboriginal population has grown at a significant rate in the past 20 years. For example, between 1981 and 2001 the Aboriginal population in Sudbury grew by a remarkable 245% from 2,140 people to 7,385 people, and increased by 172% in Thunder Bay from 3,015 people to 8,205 people, according to Census data.

As stated previously, the proportion of the total population that is comprised by Aboriginal people is relatively high in the North/Northwestern Ontario cities, ranging from a high of 11% for Kenora to a low of 1% for Ottawa (7% for Thunder Bay, 4.5% for Sudbury and 2.4% for Barrie/Midland).

In sections 3.2 to 3.9, the 2001 Census data is reported along with the UATF community survey participants’ responses (N = 1,078) regarding sex, marital status, age, education, income levels, residency and relationships to their communities of origin. As well, key informant interview participants’ responses (N = 247) from the Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations’

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5 The community survey data is referred to as “UATF quantitative data” and the findings from the key informant interviews as “UATF qualitative data,” in the tables and figures.
interview guide and the Aboriginal community members’ interview guide are provided where relevant. The two UATF data sets, the quantitative community survey and the qualitative key informant interviews were collected from January to September 2006 in the five research sites.

3.2.1 Gender

The UATF respondents’ gender (sex) profiles are shown in Figure 3A above. Figure 3A shows the gender profile of community survey respondents broken out by city; Figure 3B, on the following page, shows the gender profile of community survey respondents in all five cities combined.

The quantitative data shown in Figure 3A shows that a greater percentage of women participants than men participants responded to the community survey in each of the UATF cities.

- The highest percentage of respondents (68.2%) were women in Thunder Bay.
- Kenora had the highest percentage (47.1%) of male respondents.

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6 We have intentionally used the term ‘gender’ rather than ‘sex’ as a way of expanding on notions of male and female traits being tied exclusively to a person’s biology. ‘Gender’ is a more inclusive and socially constructed term that has allowed respondents to self-identify as male, female or transgendered based upon a number of other considerations.
Figure 3b shows the gender profile of all community survey respondents as a percentage of all UATF cities. Female respondents predominated in the community survey sample overall. A total of 1,078 participants completed the community surveys in the five research sites. Three hundred and ninety one respondents were male and 626 respondents were female. Sixty-one gender responses were missing or blank on the surveys.

The qualitative data (key informant interviews) had a slightly higher percentage of female respondents at 62.7% than the quantitative data (community surveys) at 58.1%. Figure 3c shows the gender profile of all key informant interview respondents as a percentage of all UATF cities.
Overall, the voices of women respondents were heard more often in each of the UATF cities researched. Within each city, women also participated more in every research instrument, with the exception of the key informant interviews of community members in Thunder Bay, where the number of male and female participants was equal (see Table 3c).

Female respondents also outweigh the number of male respondents in the key informant interviews (qualitative data), as shown in Table 3c, which cross-tabulates respondents for two key informant interview guides common to all cities—Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations (ED) and Aboriginal community members (CM). Gender data is shown broken down by city and interview type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>CM</td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Bay</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrie, Midland and Orillia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudbury</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenora</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 82 males were interviewed
- 165 females were interviewed
- N = 247 key informant interview participants

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7 A total of 308 key informant interviews were conducted with a diversity of individuals, including: Executive Directors of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, staff of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, youth workers, government employees and general Aboriginal community members. Data was gathered on the types of individuals varied among the cities. For example, government workers were included in the sample in Thunder Bay but no other research site. But in all cities Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations and community members were included in the sample and constitute the majority of interviews conducted and, therefore, it is their data that is reported in the tables and figures. Thus the sample size reported in the tables and figures is 247 (i.e. the total number of Executive Directors and community members) rather than 308 (see: Table 3c). On the other hand, data from all the types of key informants interviewed appear in quotations throughout the report.
Women respondents to the key informant interviews outnumber men respondents 2:1. Seventy-nine of the 247 respondents are women Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations, and 86 of the respondents are Aboriginal women community members. Their contributions to the research are further elaborated in Chapters 5 and 11, respectively.

The higher number of urban Aboriginal women respondents in the UATF research reflects the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report 10 years ago. The RCAP data shows higher numbers of women than men amongst First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in urban centres (1996, v. 4, p. x). In UATF cities, women also had greater representation on Community Advisory Committees and in research participation. This gender imbalance may reflect the fact that women tend to be Executive Directors of urban Aboriginal organizations more than men, and are more active in the urban Aboriginal community. The role of women in community development is further examined in Chapter 8.

3.2.2 Family characteristics and marital status

The 2001 Census data shows that urban Aboriginal families are generally larger than non-Aboriginal urban families in the five cities, particularly in Thunder Bay (32% of Aboriginal families having three or more children compared to 17% of non-Aboriginal families) and Sudbury (21% of Aboriginal families compared to 16% of non-Aboriginal families). However, in Kenora, Barrie/Midland and Ottawa, the rates were relatively equal for the two groups in terms of families having more than three children.

One of the most striking findings of the 2001 Census is the high degree of single parent families (the large majority headed by women) among urban Aboriginal people compared to non-Aboriginal people in all five cities. The rates were:

- Thunder Bay — 41% for Aboriginal families compared to 17% for non-Aboriginal families;
- Kenora — 29% compared to 16%;
- Ottawa — 26% compared to 13%;
- Sudbury — 25% compared to 16%; and
- Barrie/Midland — 23% compared to 12%.
These findings have significant implications for urban Aboriginal people, especially women, who are attempting to attain a stable economic existence in the city. With large single parent families, urban Aboriginal women face major challenges in finding daycare, obtaining employment and getting out of poverty, issues discussed later in this report.

Community survey participants in the UATF cities, with the exception of Thunder Bay, responded to questions about their marital status. Figure 3d shows the findings for marital status by city. Figure 3e, on the following page, displays participant responses combined for the four participating cities.

Thus, there was some variation in marital status among the five UATF cities studied. Over one quarter of the survey respondents did not report their marital status. For those who did respond, UATF community survey participants were mostly married or living as common law, or they were single/widowed.
3.2.3 Education

In 2001, about 33% of Aboriginal men and 39% of Aboriginal women 25 years and over had less than high school as their highest level of schooling.
—Statistics Canada, 2006, page 2

The documentation of education levels for urban Aboriginal peoples was an important part of the UATF study of 1981. The information in Table 3d has been taken from the original UATF report so as to provide a direct comparison to education levels today.

The 2001 Census data for the five cities demonstrates that while the levels of education for urban Aboriginal people are improving significantly, there remains a gap in attainment compared to non-Aboriginal people. A comparison of the proportion of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population aged 25–34 years who are not attending school and who have completed post-secondary education in 2001 reveals the following:

- Kenora — 35% of Aboriginal people completed post-secondary education compared to 45% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Thunder Bay — 31% compared to 49%;
- Sudbury — 36% compared to 51%;
- Barrie/Midland — 44% compared to 49%; and
- Ottawa — 47% compared to 49%.

Figure 3e: Marital status (UATF quantitative data)

- 32.7% of respondents reported being married or living in common law relationships
- 32.3% of respondents reported being single or widowed
- 8.7% of respondents reported being separated or divorced
- 26.2% missing responses
Although, as previously stated, the 1981 and the current UATF study are not directly comparable in terms of methodology, we can nonetheless see some general improvement trends in post-secondary education levels for urban Aboriginal people, although we continue to observe continued disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education attainment.

It is interesting to note that the highest levels of post-secondary education and the smallest gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are in Ottawa and Barrie/Midland. This highlights the disparity between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern regions in Ontario. This difference is evident in several of the findings of the UATF study.

The level of completion of post-secondary education was substantially higher among urban Aboriginal women than Aboriginal men in all five cities in 2001 according to the Census. Further, Aboriginal women had a greater tendency to return to school later in life than their male and non-Aboriginal counterparts.
FIGURE 3f Level of education by city (UATF quantitative data)

- Kenora has the highest percentage (38%) of respondents with less than high school graduation as their highest level of education of all cities.
- Thunder Bay has the highest percentage (47%) of respondents with high school graduation as their highest level of education of all cities.
- Thunder Bay has the highest percentage (45%) of respondents with post-secondary graduation as their highest level of education of all cities.
- Ottawa, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Sudbury all have a high percentage (28% in Barrie Midland Orillia and 22% in Sudbury) of respondents with some post-secondary graduation as their highest level of education.
- The overall rates of post-secondary graduates in Thunder Bay (45%), Ottawa (35%), Sudbury (34%) and Barrie/Midland/Orillia (33%) are quite high compared to Kenora (20%).

UATF participants in the current community survey provided information about their levels of education and school leaving. The data presented below draws from each of the cities, and then shows participant responses from the community survey data as an aggregate of all five cities. Figures 3f and 3g show reported educational attainment levels.

Community survey participants were asked to state the highest level of education that they had attained. Their responses by the five UATF cities are shown above in Figure 3f. Two things to note about the figures are:

1. the percent axis ranges from 0 to 50%; and,
2. Thunder Bay respondents were not asked about post-secondary education.
It is interesting to compare the educational levels of the Task Force respondents to those reported by the 2001 Census. The rates of completion of post-secondary education are very similar for Sudbury (Census, 36%; UATF, 33%) and Ottawa (Census, 47%; UATF, 45%). However, the rates of completion of post-secondary education are significantly lower for the UATF sample in Barrie/Midland/Orillia (Census, 44%; UATF, 33%) and Kenora (Census, 35%; UATF, 20%). Interestingly, the rates of completion for post-secondary education were higher in the UATF sample than the Census in Thunder Bay (Census, 31%; UATF, 45%). Given the fact that the UATF sample is not strictly representative of the Aboriginal populations in the five cities, the differences may be the result of a random sampling error.

Thus, the greatest percentage of UATF participants (35.1%) for all five UATF sites reported post-secondary graduation as their highest level of education. This finding shows an increase of 14% in the number of urban Aboriginal people completing post-secondary education since the 1981 Task Force study.

3.2.4 Age
One of the most striking features of the urban Aboriginal population, as reported in the 2001 Census data, is how young it is compared to the non-Aboriginal population in all five cities.
• Kenora — 50% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age compared to 30% of the non-Aboriginal population, with 35% of the Aboriginal population under 15 years of age;
• Thunder Bay — 48% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 compared to 30% of the non-Aboriginal population, with 33% of the Aboriginal population under 15 years of age;
• Sudbury — 44% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 compared to 31% of the non-Aboriginal population, with 25% of the Aboriginal population under 15;
• Barrie/Midland — 43% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 compared to 34% of the non-Aboriginal population, with 27% of the Aboriginal population under 15; and
• Ottawa — 38% of the Aboriginal population is under 25 compared to 32% of the non-Aboriginal population, with 21% of the Aboriginal population under 15.

For consent purposes, respondents in the UATF research were selected at 18 years of age and older. The qualitative and quantitative data across cities did not consistently use the same age categories; thus the two data sets, community survey and key informant interviews cannot be merged.
The age range of respondents for the qualitative data is shown by city in Figure 3h, with these findings:

- Thunder Bay — greatest percentage of respondents at 35–44 years (35.1%);
- Ottawa — greatest percentage of respondents at 25–34 years (24.6%);
- Barrie / Midland / Orillia — greatest percentage of respondents at 45–54 years (24.6%); and
- Sudbury — greatest percentage of respondents under 24 years (26.7%).

The age range of respondents is aggregated in Figure 3i, and supports the data broken out in Figure 3h for the five cities — that the largest group of community survey respondents was 35–44 years of age.

As previously stated, the 2001 Census reported that the Aboriginal population living in cities is typically younger than the non-Aboriginal population. Twenty percent of the current UATF sample was under 25 years of age. But Aboriginal youth under 16 — a large and growing cohort of urban Aboriginal children and youth — were not selected to participate in the UATF study. Despite this limitation, recommendations and resulting programs and services must consider the implications of an increasingly young population of Aboriginal people. There will be a huge challenge in the future to work with Aboriginal youth to develop cultural, educational, social and employment initiatives that go beyond those currently available to them.
3.3 Employment and income of Aboriginal people in Ontario

The 2001 Census reveals much higher unemployment rates for Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kenora and Barrie/Midland, and no significant difference in Ottawa.

- Thunder Bay — 23% unemployment rate for Aboriginal people compared to 8% for non-Aboriginal people
- Sudbury — 20% compared to 9%
- Kenora — 16% compared to 8%
- Barrie/Midland — 8% compared to 4%
- Ottawa — 6% compared to 6%

These statistics again demonstrate the economic disparity that exists between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern Ontario. Further, the Census data indicates that Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 experienced the highest unemployment rates in all five cities. The disproportionately high number of young Aboriginal people, coupled with high unemployment rates, and a lack of programs and services (as discussed in Chapter 9) could negatively affect future generations of urban Aboriginal people.

A significant number of respondents to the community survey were not working (44.7%) compared to 55.3% who were working.

Community survey participants in all UATF cities, with the exception of Thunder Bay, reported their occupations. Their responses are shown in Figure 3j.

![Figure 3j: Occupation type (UATF quantitative data)](chart)
Thus, community survey participants’ work is clustered in low skilled occupations. Over one half of the respondents (56%) reported working in the service industry, marketing/retail or as a labourer. Twenty-nine percent of respondents were employed in what can be considered higher skilled positions such as education (12%), administration (10%) and civil servants (7%).

### 3.4 Income of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario

Income levels of Native people in Ontario are significantly lower than for the general population (UATF, 1981, p.18).

The above finding comes from the 1981 UATF study. At that time researchers found that although urban Aboriginal people cited employment as the most important reason for moving to the city, their income levels within the city were not on par with the non-Aboriginal population. Twenty-five years later, UATF respondents are still more likely to be poor than not. Nearly half of the UATF community survey respondents reported an annual income under $20,000.

Figure 3k shows annual income as reported by the UATF community survey participants. This figure demonstrates that the highest percentage of Aboriginal respondents make the least amount of money (less than $20,000). In addition, as incomes rise, the percentage of Aboriginal persons at that income level decreases. Almost one half of the respondents have annual incomes under $20,000.

**Figure 3k** Annual income (UATF quantitative data)

- 48% of respondents’ annual income is below $20,000
- 22% of respondents’ annual income is over $40,000
Conversely, 22% of community survey respondents for all cities combined reported making over $40,000 annually. This finding supports a claim that there is an urban Aboriginal middle class forming in Canada.

According to the 2001 Census, the rate of Aboriginal individuals earning over $40,000 is lower than that for non-Aboriginal people in the five UATF sites (this rate is somewhat lower than the findings of the UATF community survey sample; i.e., 22% for the UATF and 19% for the Census). The Census reports that the total median incomes from all sources for people earning $40,000 and over is about 10% lower for Aboriginal people than it is for non-Aboriginal people:

- Kenora — 15% of Aboriginal people earned $40,000 or more compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Thunder Bay — 15% of Aboriginal people compared to 28% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 19% of Aboriginal people compared to 27% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Barrie/Midland — 18% of Aboriginal people compared to 28% of non-Aboriginal people; and
- Ottawa — 27% of Aboriginal people compared to 38% of non-Aboriginal people.

*Figure 3l* shows that urban Aboriginal women tend to earn less than Aboriginal men. There are a significant proportion of women who are

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**Figure 3l** Gender and income of respondents by city (UATF quantitative data)

- 50% of urban Aboriginal women earn less than $20,000 annually, compared to 44% of urban Aboriginal men
- 11% of urban Aboriginal women earn more than $60,000 annually, compared to 15% of urban Aboriginal men
the poorest urban Aboriginal residents. At the same time, another group of women earn substantial salaries. Thus, there is a significant group of women who are living in poverty, presumably heading single parent families, unemployed and relying on social assistance. Simultaneously, there are Aboriginal women who have stable economic lives in the city, who are presumed to be both well-educated and employed in higher paying jobs. This latter group does not alter the fact that, overall, salaries are low for urban Aboriginal people.

Indeed, the 2001 Census data reports that a significant number of urban Aboriginal people, particularly women, live below the poverty line as defined by Statistics Canada. That is, they need a larger share of income for basic necessities — food, shelter and clothing — than the average Non-Aboriginal urban family. The rates of Aboriginal people living below the poverty line in each of the five sites are as follows:

- Thunder Bay — 34% of Aboriginal people are living under the poverty line compared to 14% for non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 26% of Aboriginal people compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Kenora — 24% of Aboriginal people compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Ottawa — 22% of Aboriginal people compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal people; and
- Barrie/Midland — 20% of Aboriginal people compared to 10% of non-Aboriginal people.

It is interesting to note the comparatively high rate of poverty among Aboriginal people in Ottawa, despite also having the highest incomes (over $40,000, as shown in Figure 3m). Despite the stereotype of Aboriginal people in Ottawa having professional jobs in government or Aboriginal organizations, a significant number of poor people live there as well.

At the same time, the findings also challenge the stereotype of all urban Aboriginal people, male or female, living in a state of poverty and experiencing social problems. This is clearly not the case. It should be emphasized that, despite the considerable challenges Aboriginal people experience in cities, not all urban Aboriginal people are ‘victims.’ The situation of urban Aboriginal people earning higher incomes is discussed in Chapter 12.
3.5 Residency in the city

*Aboriginal people live in cities. This simple declarative statement hides a complex reality.*  
**Newhouse & Peters, 2003**

Newhouse and Peters (2003) note the movement of Aboriginal people to Canadian urban areas has been occurring since 1951. At that time, only 6.7% of Aboriginal people lived in cities. By 2001, the number of Aboriginal people living in Canadian cities increased to 49% (2003: 5). Some Aboriginal leaders estimate that as many as 70% now reside in ur-
urban areas. The challenge for research such as the UATF study is to understand and convey this complex reality. The challenge for government is to use these understandings to guide federal, provincial and municipal policy and programming available to urban Aboriginal people. Longtime urban Aboriginal residency can contribute to strong Aboriginal communities developing within cities.

It is clear that urban Aboriginal people are highly mobile. They tend to move more often than non-Aboriginal people both in terms of inter-community and intra-community moves. The 2001 Census reports that Aboriginal people move frequently within the city, as well as often moving in and out of the city, ordinarily to their communities of origin:

- Thunder Bay — 42% of Aboriginal people had moved at least once within Thunder Bay between 1996 and 2001, and only 36% of Aboriginal people had lived at the same address for five years compared to 68% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Ottawa — 36% of Aboriginal people had moved at least once within Ottawa between 1996 and 2001 and 40% had lived at the same address for five years compared to 53% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Kenora — 35% of Aboriginal people had moved within Kenora between 1996 and 2001 and 51% were at the same address compared to 65% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 34% of Aboriginal people had moved within Sudbury between 1996 and 2001 and 47% had lived at the same address compared to 64% of non-Aboriginal people; and
- Barrie/Midland — 26% of Aboriginal people had moved within Barrie/Midland between 1996 and 2001 and 26% were at the same address compared to 49% of non-Aboriginal people.

In many cases, frequent moving within a city is closely related to living in poverty. Just as it is difficult to attain a stable economic existence, it is also a challenge to find and retain adequate, affordable housing.

Overall, 63% of community survey participants in each of the five sites reported living in their current city for five years or more. At the same time, over one third of the participants are relatively recent city residents, having lived there for less than five years. Figures 3n and 3o on the following page show the length of time participants have been living in their current city, in total and with a city-by-city breakdown, respectively.
Sudbury has by far the longest term residents (75% in residence for five years or more) followed by Ottawa (62% in residence for five years or more); Thunder Bay (59% in residence for five years or more), Barrie/Midland/Orillia (52% in residence for five years or more) and Kenora (51% in residence for five years or more). Thus, the pattern that emerges is one wherein the majority of urban Aboriginal people have lived in the city for a substantial period of time (although for less time than non-
Aboriginal people), with a sizable number having moved to the city quite recently. Several challenges arise out of this situation, including: the task of maintaining a strong cultural identity in the city; obtaining adequate affordable housing; integrating into the social and economic life of the city; and perhaps most importantly, forming a stable and vibrant Aboriginal community in the city. In addition, providing programs and services to a group of people with such diverse experiences of urban life (i.e. newcomers and long-term residents) is a significant challenge for urban agencies.

Although UATF participants reported an important connection to the city in which they are living, their residency does not preclude a relationship with their community of origin. The following sections, 3.6 to 3.8, explore the relationship of UATF community survey respondents to a First Nations community of origin.

### 3.6 Links to a community of origin

Links to a community of origin were important to the key informant interview respondents who answered the question in the five UATF sites. The data pertaining to respondents’ relationship to their community of origin should be interpreted cautiously given the limited numbers of individuals who answered the questions. Only about half of the total sample of 247 key informant respondents answered the questions pertaining to their community of origin.

Of these, a large majority (86%) stated that they maintain links with their community of origin. Thus there appears to be a strong relationship between the city and the community of origin for the majority of key informants who responded to the question.

The nature of these links is discussed below, but it is clear that for many Aboriginal people, relocation to the city is not viewed as a conclusive move. The option to maintain links with their community of origin remains strong for urban Aboriginal people because of such factors as: the proximity of the First Nation and Métis communities to the cities, the history of mobility of Aboriginal people, the fact that the land is such a fundamental source of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture, and the continuance of strong family and social ties to the communities.
3.7 Visiting a community of origin

Participants in the community survey spoke to the reasons for visiting their community of origin. The responses of those who visited their community of origin are shown in Figure 3p. It should be noted that, on average, about one third of the community survey answered the questions pertaining to this topic.

Because some of the UATF cities are located adjacent to a First Nation community, it is reasonable there is some variation between cities. Respondents’ reasons for visiting their community of origin are shown by city in Figure 3q.

Community survey respondents reported family and friends as the primary reason for visiting their community of origin. For Thunder Bay respondents, funerals and weddings were the main reasons reported for visiting their community of origin.

It is clear from the data that the majority of UATF respondents who answered the questions regarding community of origin do not abandon their links to their communities of origin—even though they have long tenure within the city. The next section develops a profile of the respondents that return to their communities of origin most often.

As shown in Table 3e, women who visit their community of origin make slightly more visits than men (on average, 6.8 visits per year for women compared to 6.2 visits for men). In addition, UATF respondents

![Figure 3p Reasons for visiting community of origin (UATF quantitative data)](image)
visiting most often are those with the highest economic ability to do so; i.e., those with an annual income of over $60,000. Respondents in this group make an average of 11 visits annually, compared to 7 annual visits for those earning $40,000 to $60,000; 5.5 visits for those earning under $20,000; and 4.7 annual visits for those earning $20,000 to $40,000.

When the factor of age is examined, respondents between the ages of 45 and 55 visit their communities of origin most frequently, with an average of 9.2 annual visits. Following closely behind are young people, up to the age of 34, visiting their community of origin on an average of 7.8 times per annum. This latter finding may reflect the fact that younger people may be attending school and travel back and forth to their community of origin before settling into a permanent location to obtain employment or start a family.

The majority of the respondents indicated they will continue to live in the city permanently. However, there is also some degree of an ongoing relationship between the city and community.

**TABLE 3E** Frequency of visits to community of origin (UATF quantitative data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 3Q** Reasons for returning to community of origin (UATF quantitative data)
of origin for many urban Aboriginal people. A number of complex factors, such as sex, income, age and marital status influence the frequency and nature of the visits.

The relationship between the urban community and the community of origin is significant for many urban Aboriginal people and is thus an important factor that must be taken into account in program and service planning, as well as the retention of cultural identity and the development of a strong Aboriginal community in the city. It may be the case that the links to the community of origin primarily reflect a number of family, social and cultural factors. It may also be the case that the motivation to go back is, at least in part, the result of the lack of viable social and cultural resources available in the city. If this is the case, it points to the need of developing sustainable relationships and social and cultural institutions in the city to foster a healthy urban Aboriginal community in the long term.

First Nations communities and urban Aboriginal agencies could mutually benefit from the development of a formal relationship, given the high rates of migration of Aboriginal people from First Nations communities to cities and the continued importance of the link between the city and community of origin. For example, urban Aboriginal agencies could maintain regular communications with First Nation social services, education and housing officials to work toward a “seamless” entry for First Nations people migrating to the city. Individuals and families could be assisted in their preparation for the move and their initial adjustment to urban life with respect to orientation, finances, housing, education and employment. Urban Aboriginal agencies could benefit by providing services to First Nations newcomers on a fee for service basis. New urban migrants would benefit from the provision of services prior to and during their move. In addition, the coordination of services could assist longer-term residents in their moves they may make between the city and their community of origin.

3.8 Moving back to community of origin

Although some UATF respondents visit their community of origin frequently, the majority of respondents (60%) do not intend to return to their communities to live permanently in the future. At the same time,
40% of the UATF community survey is a significant percentage of people who intend to move back later.

Despite the fact that women tend to go back to their community of origin somewhat more frequently than men, a higher percentage of male respondents to the question reported that they intend to move back to their community of origin (44%) than women (35%). People in the higher income brackets tend to report intentions to move back to their community of origin more than individuals in the lowest income bracket (42% of those earning over $40,000 compared to 35% of those earning less than $20,000).

A higher percentage of younger and middle age individuals report intentions of moving back to their communities of origin than older individuals, especially those over 65 years of age. Of those who answered this question, only 8% of those over the age of 65 intend to move back compared to an average of approximately 40% in the younger age categories (i.e. under 35 years of age). Finally, despite the fact that separated and divorced individuals tend to return to their community of origin most frequently, they are the least likely to move back permanently. Of those who answered the question, 21% of separated and divorced individuals reported intentions to move back, compared to 44% of single and widowed individuals and 40% of those who are married and living common law.

3.9 In summary

This chapter has focused predominantly on presenting both 2001 Census and current UATF quantitative findings in order to provide a demographic ‘snapshot’ of urban Aboriginal people in the five cities included in the UATF research. The overall demographic picture of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario is complex and diverse; however, based on the majority of responses, the average participant in the UATF study can be portrayed thus:

- has lived in the city for 5–20 years;
- is a young university-educated woman, unemployed, with an annual income of less than $20,000 and the head of a single-parent family;
- if she is one of the 25% of respondents making $60,000 or more, she is most likely to maintain strong links to her community of origin;
• she visits her community of origin mainly to connect with family and friends;
• she lives near enough, or has enough income to visit her community of origin about seven times a year;
• she intends to continue visiting between her urban community and community of origin, but she does not intend to leave the city to live permanently in her community of origin.

Having therefore explored the demographic makeup of urban Aboriginal people in the five cites under study we can now move this discussion to how Aboriginal cultural and identity are expressed in these communities.
KEY FINDINGS

- Aboriginal cultures are dynamic and flourishing in the cities in the UATF study, but a sense of community must be intended and fostered to deal with the pressures of individualism.
- Tension between traditional and contemporary cultural expression in the city create challenges to being both urban and Aboriginal.
- Traditional culture is considered to be very important to urban Aboriginal identity.
- Aboriginal languages and Elders are essential to the cultures of urban Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal people require a cultural centre in the city where people can socialize and access their culture.

4.1 The importance of culture

As cultures move and change across time, place and people, its boundaries, expressions and myriad meanings can often be very difficult to succinctly capture in a report such as this. The UATF findings point to this fluid quality of culture as many of the responses highlight the interconnectedness between culture and identity wherein racism, gender, economic affluence, mobility and the realities of colonization in Canada are specific issues.

More specifically, urban Aboriginal people today are living with the legacy of early Indian Act repression and the residue of residential schools in addition to those laws and state policies that were supposed to clear land for development, build the nation-state and assimilate Aboriginal
people into general society. Although the most repressive sections of the *Indian Act* have been rescinded and the last residential school was closed in 1987, colonial relations of domination persist in a variety of forms including (but not limited to): the failure of the criminal justice system and Aboriginal over-representation in prisons and the over-representation of Aboriginal children and youth in child welfare and youth justice systems; racism and stereotyping; enduring poverty in Aboriginal communities; persistent health difficulties relating to that poverty; and the decline of Aboriginal languages.

In the early seventies, many researchers (e.g. Dosman, 1972; Nagler, 1970; Denton, 1972) studied Aboriginal cultures and identities as more Aboriginal people moved into urban centres. Most of these studies focused on the adaptation processes of Aboriginal people in cities. Many of these researchers spoke of urban Aboriginal poverty, cultural conflict and loss of culture. There were a few exceptions to this predominantly negative view of urban Aboriginal people and culture (e.g. McCaskill, 1981) the majority of studies perpetuated a one-dimensional image of urban Aboriginal people, with the view that urban Aboriginal cultures are incompatible with the city. As Larry Krotz (1980) said in his book, *Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada’s Cities*, “There is a strong, sometimes racist, perception that being Aboriginal and being urban are mutually exclusive” (pp. 10-11).

Particularly prevalent is the notion that Aboriginal culture, unlike all other cultures, is static and cannot change. This longstanding assumption creates tension between varying perceptions of ‘Aboriginal authenticity,’ making things particularly challenging for those living ‘away from the land’ and in urban centres. Because of these pressures, living in the city, being economically successful and experiencing a general sense of wellness can present itself as a significant threat to these preconceived notions of Aboriginal identity.

This research has shown that the general implication of these pressures is ongoing tension between contemporary and traditional Aboriginal cultural expressions, which influences the meaning of Aboriginal identity and is sometimes a source of conflict within the urban Aboriginal community.

This tension is occurring within an overall view that Aboriginal culture is extremely important, as a matter of distinction from other cultures, and that it is tradition (knowledge, teachings, ceremony and lan-
guage, etc.) that marks the boundaries of difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginality. Moreover, tradition often forms the basis of contemporary cultural forms found in art galleries, museums, literature, film and video, dance, and theater. It is from within these sources that urban Aboriginal communities are emerging.¹

The vast majority of respondents (76%) stressed the importance of traditional Aboriginal culture as important, and 80% participated in traditional Aboriginal cultural activities. These findings correspond with J.W. Berry’s report on ‘Aboriginal Cultural Identity’, as part of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). More specifically, this study showed that ‘Aboriginal experiences’ such as traditional cultural expressions (Elders, language and spirituality), family, land and the environment are thought to have a positive, strengthening effect on Aboriginal cultural identity. Berry further concluded that the complex compositions of Aboriginal cultural identities today can only be fully appreciated within the greater social context of colonization in Canada (RCAP, Vol. 4:521).

The colonial assumption of Aboriginal inferiority and the tension surrounding contemporary and traditional culture can lead to many cultural challenges for urban Aboriginal people. This tension, along with many others, may be a factor in the 2001 Census finding that there are a significant number of Aboriginal people in urban areas who have Aboriginal ancestry but who do not identify themselves as Aboriginal. The most dramatic example of this phenomenon is in the Greater Toronto Area where almost 40,000 people stated that they had Aboriginal ancestry, but only approximately 20,000 identified themselves as Aboriginal people. This potential loss of Aboriginal people to the general urban population could have significant implications for the future viability of urban Aboriginal communities.

Another dimension of this potential loss of members from the community could be the reluctance of some urban Aboriginal people, particularly those who have become economically successful, to identify with the negative representations of Aboriginal people as ‘problems’ or ‘victims’. Many Aboriginal people are increasingly impatient with the ‘victim mentality.’ Thus newly emerging labels such as ‘residential school

¹ See Ekman, D. 2006. ‘Housing Community: Museums, Urban Aboriginal People, and Development’ (unpublished paper, Department of Indigenous Studies, Trent University) for further reading on the role of museums in building urban Aboriginal communities.
intergenerational trauma’ are powerful labels that draw attention to serious past injustices and the current plight of Aboriginal people can be used to lever resources for much-needed programs and services, but, if overused, can serve to lump all Aboriginal people into a new negative stereotype that many urban Aboriginal people cannot and will not identify with. If alternative positive representations of being Aboriginal and new forms of Aboriginal cultural expressions along with institutions to support those expressions (such as cultural centres) are not available for this group to maintain their identity they may feel marginalized and not participate in the Aboriginal community within the urban centre.

Many of our respondents spoke about the difficulty of being both urban and Aboriginal:

I have disconnected from the Aboriginal community to be successful in mainstream. (Sudbury Key Informant Interview)

It is a challenge reconciling my urban and Native identities. Finding where I fit as a Native. Feeling part of my culture, since I don’t actively participate in ‘traditional’ things. (Barrie/Midland/Orillia Key Informant Interview)

People who are trying to better themselves are put down by other Aboriginal people who say they are ‘apples’ and rejecting where they come from or called ‘townies’ vs. those living on reserves (Kenora Key Informant Interview)

Today’s generation is becoming divided between those who choose to better themselves and seek higher goals and those who choose to engage in activities that perpetuate the image of the ‘drunk Indian’ and it frustrates a lot of people. (Kenora Key Informant Interview)

My father didn’t share his ethnicity so I didn’t really know I was Cree until I was 14 or 15 years old: this left some really bad self-image problems to get over in adult life. I never felt as good as anyone else, and remained ashamed of my identity throughout my youth...I was the only Native student...in my high school years...I experienced institutional racism through the omission of Native people in books and in history...My
teacher was racist and discouraged my efforts and caused me to give up. With no economic support I returned to an abusive relationship for me and my children.  (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

It was ... It was hard I guess. It was good. It was hard. I lived on and off reserve up until I was about I guess maybe ten years old and then we moved permanently into the small town of Sioux Narrows. My father describes himself as Métis. My mother is a full blooded Ojibway, or she was a full blooded Ojibway Indian. My father was Métis, but kids kind of considered him white. So it was one of those situations where I kind of felt not sure where I belonged. When I was living on reserve, even though I had friends and family, I always felt that there was something different about me. I was treated sometimes differently, but even though I spoke the language and I lived with my family and stuff like that and we were all so, destitute I guess, if you will. We were quite poor when we were growing up, so we didn’t have an awful lot materially. So with that, I always felt different. And then when we lived off reserve with my dad, even though things were better, still there was a feeling of again, not really quite sure where we belonged. Sometimes we were called dirty Indians.  (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

There a sense of non-belonging for urban Aboriginal people. The living conditions on some reserves are really bad; people sniffing, kids fighting, low level of education. When you ask for support from your community it’s never given because you live off reserve.
(KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Many Aboriginals working within mainstream carry two identities — one when with white people and an authentic identity with their own.
(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

— One thing that has really struck a chord was what [name of other participant] said about not looking Indian. My father is from Finland and my mother is First Nations. I don’t know what I am. Am I Native and Canadian?
— No you are Findian! [laughter]
(THUNDER BAY FOCUS GROUP)
On the other hand, many respondents in the research spoke positively about the urban Aboriginal community.

*The urban Aboriginal community in Sudbury is a long standing, cooperative, developing and collaborative group. It has been supported by Aboriginal individuals of all groups.* (Sudbury Key Informant Interview)

It still surprises me how easily they can join forces during a crisis. (Kenora Key Informant Interview)

With respect to myself accessing services from Aboriginal organizations I usually feel comfortable and feel a strong sense of support and community belonging. (Ottawa Key Informant Interview)

A lot of urban Aboriginal people are from different areas but it is a close community and people are supportive of one another. (Ottawa Key Informant Interview)

Even though I haven’t gained materially, I do feel better amongst my own people. (Ottawa Key Informant Interview)

*Once again my involvement in the Barrie Aboriginal community provided me with additional information on my Native heritage and helped me grow as a Native man.* (Barrie/Midland/Orillia Life History)

Thus a key finding from the study is the importance of maintaining and enhancing Aboriginal culture and identity to urban Aboriginal people.

Our respondents from the community survey, key informant interviews, focus groups and life histories spoke about culture with great diversity. Patterns of responses did, however, emerge around the following themes:

- relationships—the importance of simply spending time together as an urban Aboriginal cultural community;
- the values of caring, family, food and daily acts of sharing;
- that culture is mobile and can flourish in the urban Aboriginal community, but that a sense of community must be intentional and fostered in order to deal with pressures of individualism;
the importance of traditional teachings, ceremonies and Elders, and the challenges of maintaining the integrity of ceremonial practice in culturally diverse urban centers;
• the need for cultural events and opportunities for learning for all Aboriginal people, and not solely for those members of the community deemed at risk;
• the importance of maintaining Aboriginal languages;
• the importance of cultural events such as pow wows, feasts etc. where people can come together and practice their culture;
• the need for sacred space, i.e. an area of land in or near the city to practice Aboriginal ceremonies;
• the need for a cultural centre in the city where people can socialize and practice their culture.

How do I express my heritage? I was very close to my grandfather. I used to follow him around and I picked up many things from him. You don’t realize that this is culture. It is not teaching in the western sense of school; it is just about being there. And 40 years later I can still look back and think what he might have done, and that would be the best thing to do. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

My culture to me is mostly about living in my heart. I don’t have regalia, I don’t have a drum; I let people know that I am proud to be an Indian. I know who I am, and I don’t care about racist attitudes. I am fascinated by other tribes as well...I went to the powwow this weekend and this was really great. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Traditional Aboriginal culture is an important part of Aboriginal community life in Sudbury. This is where we have the opportunity to gather and celebrate Aboriginal heritage in our community. This also serves as a connecting force within urban raised and other cultures leading to increased acceptance. (SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

I feel a sense of belonging with other native people in the city, more so then on the reserve. Things like averting eye contact are weird for me, and on Manitoulin, I felt isolated because I am more outgoing and it throws people off. With urban people on the other hand, I feel more of a sense
of belonging. There are no preconceived notions about how to act native, and there is more of a general acceptance.
(BARRIE/MIDLAND/ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

I took the Native Centre job and this was when thing really started to change for me. I was living the Native culture for the first time in my life. My indoctrination into the Native community was a heady time for me. I felt that people told me the truth for the first time in my life. I was attracted to the humour and spirituality of my people.
(THUNDER BAY LIFE HISTORY)

I express my Aboriginal identity in my beliefs, how I live my life through my work in an Aboriginal organization and my volunteer work at the Métis Centre. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

We need the opportunity to gather and celebrate Aboriginal heritage in our community. (SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Opportunities to learn Aboriginal languages in Sudbury? Don’t have time to teach it, hard to find people to teach it.
(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

The research conducted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) represents a shift in viewing culture and identity in urban areas—the development of a new identity in response to the challenges and opportunities in an urban centre. David Newhouse says:

The fundamental change of the past 20 years has been, I think, the acceptance of both Aboriginal people and mainstream Canadians of the way in which traditional Aboriginal peoples have viewed themselves and the resultant construction of new identities, not as victims, or as noble savages, or primitive beings but as, for example, Cree, Ojibway, Inuit - with dignity and knowledge and deserving of respect and a place in contemporary society. I now see a group of people who are constructing a positive identity for themselves: who now see themselves as an integral part of and contributors to society around them (1996, Volume 4: 523).
Focus group participants spoke of cultural identity by blending traditional defining characteristics with the context of the urban environment.

The influence of traditional factors such as ancestry, appearance, and culture (knowledge of language and culture); the comparison of traditional factors with ‘situational/relationship’ factors, such as shared urban history, the networks of relationships, Aboriginal organizations and community participation; the “First Nation” versus “pan-Indian” sources of identity; the potential role of urban self-government to reinforce Aboriginal identity and culture in urban areas; and, the role of Elders in the city; and the impact of multiple generations in the city.

(FOCUS GROUP)

An important aspect of culture, therefore, is the role it has played in establishing the “healing movement” for Aboriginal people in Canada. The cultural idea of “healing” has been the central principle that numerous urban Aboriginal programs and services have been organized around. The process of healing from the negative influences discussed above has been a critical factor in the lives of countless Aboriginal people. That movement was initially housed in urban areas through the work of numerous Aboriginal organizations and programs and has now spread throughout Canada. Friendship Centres, women’s shelters, literacy programs, Elders and traditional people’s gatherings, court worker programs, the Healing and Wellness Strategy, etc. — many supported by funding from government, all took as their central mission the healing of Aboriginal people. Most of these initiatives began in urban areas and have led to significant growth in the Aboriginal community through their focus on assisting individuals create a healthy cultural identity and build a strong urban Aboriginal community.

The following sections of this chapter highlight some of the UATF findings on culture and identity; it draws on the results of the community survey, key informant interviews, focus groups on Indian Residential Schools, culture and identity, arts and heritage and Elders, and participants’ life history interviews.
4.2 Some dimensions of group identity and ethnicity

The majority of community survey respondents identified as First Nations, primarily Anishnaabe (Ojibway). Figures 4A and 4B show the participant responses to community survey questions of ethnicity.

Over 80% of UATF survey research participants identified primarily as members of a First Nation. The next largest group of UATF survey respondents identified as Métis. Of the 25% participants who answered a more specific question, close to 80% identified as Anishnaabe.

**Figure 4A Identification with Aboriginal group**

- Most respondents (81.2%) identified as being First Nation
- 8.5% of respondents identified as being Métis

**Figure 4B Aboriginal cultural affiliation**

- Most First Nations respondents (79.7%) identified as being Anishnawbe
- 902% of First Nations respondents identified as being Oji-Cree
- 6% of First Nations respondents identified as being Cree
4.3 Cultural events and participation in cities

In assessing the importance of cultural traditions, both key informants and community survey participants were asked if they participated in traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal cultural activities. As evident in the following figures, the majority of key informant (80%) and community survey participants (80%) participate in traditional cultural activities. Thus, both interviewees and survey participants’ responses highlight the importance of traditional Aboriginal culture in their urban lives.

Moreover, community survey participants (80%) pointed to the importance of a diversity (traditional and non-traditional) of Aboriginal-sponsored events and indicated their preference for such events as:

- powwows (34%);
- feasts (13.4%);
- National Aboriginal Day (13.4%);
- traditional ceremonies (12.3%);
- Aboriginal sports (5.4%); and
- artistic expression (3.9%).

Respondents were asked whether they viewed participation in traditional Aboriginal culture as important. It is clear from the answers that traditional culture is seen as important as 75.8% stated such.

They were also asked whether they engaged in traditional Aboriginal cultural events and activities. The vast majority (80.2%) replied affirmatively.
4.4 Traditional and non-traditional cultural activities

When this life history respondent was asked if, in Kenora, there are many Aboriginal-specific things to do she replied, laughing:

There’s bingo. (THUNDER BAY FOCUS GROUP)

The participation of respondents in traditional Aboriginal cultural activities sometimes occurs as part of or with their participation in general Aboriginal sponsored activities in cities. Aboriginal agencies often sponsor such events within the city, such as pow wows, feasts and spiritual ceremonies.

For some respondents, participation in cultural events in the city is an awakening to their cultural selves, as this Thunder Bay participant notes:

My parents never taught, never did anything to teach us our Native culture. My identity came later. (THUNDER BAY FOCUS GROUP)

Many Aboriginal organizations take on the role of cultural supporters as part of their mandate or vision, as the following life history participant from Thunder Bay notes. She feels that her spirituality was developed through a series of cultural teaching workshops. She has nurtured her relationships with traditional women through Aboriginal agencies in Thunder Bay. She speaks of these cultural teachings and the important relationships that grew out of her participation in these workshops:

Traditional women mentors such as [name] and [name] shaped my spiritual life through their teachings at Women Healing gatherings held over four years under the auspices of the provincial government. I ‘found my place’, my spiritual home, through these cultural teachings for women. Through my mentorships I began participating in spiritual celebrations and I have developed my own private spiritual practice. (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Another research participant echoes the cultural role of organizations:

When my oldest daughter, she’s now nineteen, when she was born, the one thing I wanted her to have, because it was something that I had, was an Indian name. And I made sure she got an Indian name when she
was a baby. So, that sense of connection to the people. To being one of the people. To the Anishnaabe people. That was very, very important to me to have that identity. Not only for myself, but for my daughter. So we did that and then I guess, I’m not a hundred percent, I don’t know if you could put it even into degrees, but I tried to respect the spiritual practice. And Treaty Three actually, working at Treaty Three taught me an awful lot about that. (Thunder Bay Key Informant Interview)

Thus, Aboriginal organizations promote culture and identity for urban Aboriginal people through their service delivery and the events that they sponsor; but more importantly through their existence as Aboriginal organizations. The importance of these events are clearly evident when respondents indicate that 77.3% participate in such events.

Community survey participants in Barrie/Midland/Orillia, Sudbury and Kenora responded to the types of Aboriginal-sponsored events that they attend in the city. Their responses were varied — some traditional and some community-based — but pow wows in the city (a traditional event in a non-traditional location) are the most frequently attended events for UATF respondents, as demonstrated in Figure 4c.

Finally, the fact that 76.4% of respondents participated in non-traditional Aboriginal cultural events demonstrates their importance.

## 4.5 Aboriginal language usage

As previously discussed, language use and fluency can be an important part of Aboriginal identity. As can be seen in Table 4a, the vast majority of key informants (92.5%) believe that it is important to speak an Aboriginal language, although only half (50.5%) of the community survey respondents reported they can speak one.

Community survey participants, were asked if they could speak an Aboriginal language and, if they could, to rate their fluency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4A Aboriginal language (UATF quantitative data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is it important to speak an Aboriginal language?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you speak an Aboriginal language?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4d illustrates the Aboriginal language fluency levels of community survey respondents.

Moreover, the community survey further reveals where Aboriginal languages are most often spoken, as seen in Figure 4e. Thus, Aboriginal languages are spoken predominantly in respondents’ homes with other members of their families.

It is clear that Aboriginal languages are extremely important to urban Aboriginal people and that there is a danger that these languages are in decline. Therefore special attention should be given in developing educational programs to contribute to the maintenance of Aboriginal languages in urban areas.

**Figure 4d** Fluency level in speaking an Aboriginal language (UATF quantitative data)

- 56.9% rated proficiency as limited or fair
- 28.4% rated proficiency as very good or excellent
- 14.7% rated proficiency as good

**Figure 4e** Places where Aboriginal languages are used (UATF quantitative data)

- 31.2% use Aboriginal language in the home
- 22.2% use Aboriginal language at traditional gatherings
- 26.6% use Aboriginal language in their home community
- 7.8% use Aboriginal language at school
- 11.7% use Aboriginal language at work
4.6 Elders and traditional people

Elders have been important to Aboriginal cultures as the holders of Indigenous knowledge, healers, counselors, spiritual teachers and ceremonial practitioners. In urban Aboriginal communities, Elders fulfill a variety of roles; however, some participants spoke of difficulties in finding Elders. Respondents from Ottawa and Kenora commented on the challenges of connecting with Elders in the urban centre:

And then there is this question of who is an Elder as somebody who is wise who you can learn from. I am interested in how you become an Elder here. Sadly I have heard of self-appointed Elders. The old people had rules to conduct your life and it was based upon logic and it made good sense. The identification of Elders is a real challenge in this community and there is a problem with those people teaching things that they haven’t learned. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

I have a hard time finding Elders. When you are in the community you know who your Elders are and there are Elders who have specialties like drums, or songs, but in the city it is not so easy. There are Elders in this community I would never use. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

The Kahnawake mainstream schools initially were refusing to teach the Aboriginal language, but Elders took the initiative. If the language is to remain alive it has to come from community in aggressive, non-threatening way. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

It is important to note that Elders are not the only source of traditional Aboriginal culture. Increasingly, traditional people, the number of opportunities for various ceremonies being preformed in urban areas (full moon, drumming etc.), the sobriety movement and other such activities reported by respondents in the study are all contributing to the evolution of Aboriginal culture as practiced in cities.

4.7 In summary

The interrelated notions of culture and identity are expressed in a diversity of ways in the city and are subject to racial and economic influences
and pressures. Inclusive cultural programming with a view to creating a center that will support Elders, language and traditional ceremony and related events as its primary function will be critical to cultivating strong urban Aboriginal communities in Ontario. This then, is a significant gap in service delivery that will need to be addressed in conjunction with the other additional gaps in social services outlined in the following chapter, Service Delivery to Urban Aboriginal People.
KEY FINDINGS

· A large number of urban Aboriginal organizations have been established since the 1981 Task Force.
· Aboriginal agencies are perceived as providing more culturally-based programs, more accountable to the Aboriginal community, and are preferred by a majority of urban Aboriginal people over mainstream agencies.
· There is a perception that urban Aboriginal agencies are not funded at the same level as non-Aboriginal agencies, and do not have the same degree of long-term funding stability, for example, core funding.
· Generally, Aboriginal people are satisfied with the service they receive from Aboriginal agencies.
· The majority of urban Aboriginal organizations focus on social services; thus, the urban Aboriginal middle class do not feel that there are sufficient organizations devoted to meeting their needs—especially the maintenance of cultural identity in urban centres.
· There is an acute need for Aboriginal cultural centres in urban areas.

5.1 Evolution of Aboriginal agencies

The 1981 Task Force report highlighted the lack of services for urban Aboriginal peoples. It identified services that needed to be met in the following areas: housing, employment, cultural awareness, drug and alcohol abuse, education, family life and childhood, social welfare, youth,
recreation, women, health and nutrition, justice, and senior citizens (1981, Figure 9, p. 57). The report recommended the development of Aboriginal organizations in cities to address these unmet needs.

Over the past 25 years the number of Aboriginal organizations and services has increased significantly in urban centres in Ontario. These organizations provide culturally-relevant programs and services to urban Aboriginal people.

Executive Director key informants provided information about the year in which their organizations were created. Figure 5a shows the evolution of Aboriginal organizations in Ontario, accordingly.

The largest growth in new Aboriginal organizations is in the twenty-year period from 1980 to 2000. It can be argued that the 1981 Task Force report had a significant impact on the development of new Aboriginal organizations in Ontario given the

**FIGURE 5A Year of formation of Aboriginal organizations**

![Bar chart showing the year of formation of Aboriginal organizations from 1905 to 2005.](image)

**TABLE 5A Number of organizations developed by actual year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The 2004 organizations represent a federal initiative called the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS). The UAS created organizations in two of the five UATF cities. The UAS has recently has been renewed.*
fact that there was such a large growth of urban Aboriginal organizations after 1980.

More specifically, respondents identified the actual years in which organizations were created. *Table 5a* shows the years with the highest number of organizations created.

Although Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations indicated that thirty-nine Aboriginal organizations have been created in the five research sites since 1985, there are still many programs and services that urban Aboriginal people must access through non-Aboriginal organizations.

### 5.2 Major challenges for Aboriginal organizations

As noted in Chapter 4, Aboriginal organizations are important to urban Aboriginal people for the maintenance of culture and identity. A research participant from Thunder Bay explains the reasons for working in an Aboriginal organization:

> Many reasons — good benefits, sense of belonging, learn your own culture. I belong to Fort William First Nation (FWFN) and I do lots of work volunteering with them, and when I worked with Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA) I got a good sense of the Métis people, and instead of going to Toronto for a meeting you might go to Sandy Lake and that’s more my style.  (THUNDER BAY FOCUS GROUP)

The importance of Aboriginal organizations in providing services and fostering a sense of belonging is not unique to the UATF research sites. In a study of the urban Aboriginal community in Los Angeles, California, Weibel-Orlando notes that [Aboriginal] institutions are distinct, “recognized by both members and observers as the social structures that provide a continuing sense of history, community and ethnic identity” (1991, p.81). According to Weibel-Orlando, “regular, consistent, predictable, face to face interactions in the context of ethnic institutions are the mechanisms by which Indians in Los Angeles approximate traditional community structures and ethos” (1991, p.83).

The UATF research findings generally concur with Weibel-Orlando’s findings on the role of Aboriginal institutions. However, there was some dissention articulated in the research, as shown in the following quota-
tion from a woman who recently moved from her First Nation community to Thunder Bay:

There are lots more Aboriginal services — not very friendly or not willing to help — for example [name of organization] and organizations say that we only serve our clients. That’s the most of the problems here [in Thunder Bay]. (Thunder Bay Women’s Plenary Session)

In the UATF research, Executive Director key informants noted that while Aboriginal culture is incorporated in the service delivery of Aboriginal organizations, these cultural services are often not provided by non-Aboriginal agencies. This lack of cultural service provision in non-Aboriginal organizations results in a decreased level of accountability to the Aboriginal community. The vast majority of Executive Directors (91.5%) stated that they include Aboriginal culture in their provision of services.

This organizational role is positive for urban Aboriginal communities. The culturally-based nature of the organizations goes beyond the provision of programs and services. For example, a case study of the N’Swakamok Friendship Centre in Sudbury discovered a distinctive “organizational ethos” in the structure and functioning of the agency (McCaskill, 1988). That is, Aboriginal culture was expressed in such areas as: staff-client relations, staff interaction, the organization’s atmosphere, the decision-making process, linkages with the larger urban Aboriginal community, and within the service delivery approach. In each of these elements of the organization’s functioning there is an attempt to reflect traditional Aboriginal cultural values and practices. Thus many Aboriginal agencies tend to: be less formal and less hierarchical; rely more on oral than written communication; focus on staff’s experience and “being” with respect to evaluating effectiveness; rely on peer support and team work; delegate tasks to a greater degree; make extensive use of volunteers; emphasize the importance of individuals assuming responsibility for their own behaviour; and take a holistic approach to providing services.

A related issue pertains to the cultural notions which inform the definitions of Aboriginal culture in service delivery. Agencies, both Aboriginal and mainstream, may define their Aboriginal clients differently. At least three notions of culture are utilized: cultural “streams” which divides groups by political or legal distinctions such as First Nation, Inuit, and
Métis (often used by government); “pan-Aboriginal” which blends Aboriginal cultures into a single melting pot; and “Status blind” which provides service to all people, while respecting their particular culture. The last approach is used to refer to all Aboriginal people regardless of origin or can mean (often used by mainstream agencies) providing services to all people that generally include visible minorities, disabled people and so on. Most Aboriginal organizations reject the pan-Aboriginal notion and recognize the individual’s distinct Aboriginal culture, while at the same time respecting all Aboriginal cultures. Thus, a Mohawk person rooted in their culture can listen to an Ojibway Elder and understand the difference but appreciate the good message.

Some Executive Directors of urban Aboriginal organizations believe that culturally-based nature of their organizations are often unrecognized, and that they fill an important role that is not funded—a role that non-Aboriginal organizations cannot fill regardless of their service delivery capacity.

5.3 The need for coordination of services

Many Executive Directors of Aboriginal and mainstream organizations alike stressed the desirability of working together to ensure increased coordination of their service delivery to Aboriginal clients. Cooperation and coordination that would work toward establishing a seamless and integrated provision of services would serve to avoid duplication of services and allow for more efficiency and help to create a more effective system to meet client needs.

However, there are some difficulties in engaging in such cooperation and coordination. Non-Aboriginal participants in an Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal plenary session in Thunder Bay spoke to the challenges of working cooperatively with Aboriginal agencies and developing a more coordinated system of service delivery:

We partner with Aboriginal organizations e.g. [name] and their expectations and services are different than ours and we have trouble coming together to deliver services.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)
We tried to partner with an Aboriginal organization but the expectations were different. It’s so hard to agree on how services are to be delivered.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

The urban Aboriginal community is complex and there are many constituencies and you can’t just ask someone to join the Board of Directors and you may have done it incorrectly and you need to build trust and knowledge and it’s easy to make cultural mistakes and then it will grow from there. More than participation, we need to represent diversity.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

Then there’s a resource issue, we don’t have the time and the resources to make contact with Aboriginal organizations. It’s important to have representation and as [the sole Aboriginal employee in a non-Aboriginal organization] I don’t have the time or the resources to make those contacts—both human and financial resources to meet the challenge of input and representation.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

You don’t know with representation, it’s hard to get representation — Status, non-Status — and if they move away from home community who do they represent [once in the urban centre] - it’s complex.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

![Figure 5B](image_url)
Echoing the community member interviewees and the community survey participants, as discussed above and shown in Figure 5b, Executive Director key informants from Aboriginal organizations perceived differences in service delivery between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in all five of the UATF cities. However, the differences in service delivery were not shared by all research participants who utilize the services of urban Aboriginal agencies. One respondent said:

*I don’t think there is as much of a difference as there should be (between mainstream and Aboriginal organizations), some not all. Agencies use the Eurocentric model and plunk indigenous faces on top. The differences need to be... on values, reclaiming tradition and culture.*

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Executive Directors also noted differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organization in terms of accountability to the Aboriginal community. In interviews they clarified that they felt a strong sense of “accountability to the urban Aboriginal community” as a result of factors such as: a Board of Directors made up of members of the Aboriginal community; the informal expectations of members of the urban Aboriginal community; and their own sense of being responsible to the Aboriginal community. When asked whether they felt that there was a difference in level of accountability to the urban Aboriginal community between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations the vast majority (92.7%) replied in the affirmative. They suggested that this “extra” dimension of their organization made provision of services more effective in that they were closely tied to the Aboriginal community, but that it also is an additional responsibility that requires time and effort to effectively meet. Further, this greater degree of accountability is often not recognized by funding agencies.

Executive Directors of non-Aboriginal organizations noted in focus groups and plenary sessions that they were serving increasing numbers of Aboriginal clients through their programs and services. As one respondent from a non-Aboriginal agency noted:

*[name of organization] serves all but we’re impacted by the increase in Aboriginal applicants to our services and it’s really high. Before there were none [Aboriginal applicants] and now 30% [Aboriginal applicants] and how do we make our services culturally competent?*

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)
On the other hand, Executive Directors from Aboriginal organizations indicated that they also serve both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients, as shown in Figure 5c.

Although the number of urban Aboriginal organizations has increased significantly, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) identified great challenges in the maintenance of Aboriginal organizations. The quotation below identifies their frustrations:

Many of the delegates spoke at length about the divisions within Aboriginal urban communities and of the frustrations of constantly chasing program dollars, of providing essential services with dwindling resources, and of their over-reliance on the aid of volunteers (Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues, 1992, p. 8)

UATF Executive Director key informants echoed the above frustrations with having to constantly chase dollars and provide adequate services with fewer financial and human resources. These participants also noted additional challenges:

We respond to many of the needs in the community, but I see an important gap in funding and so I see gaps in all of the services that we provide ... health, recreation, housing, etc ... but resources are so

![Figure 5c: Aboriginal organization service delivery for non-Aboriginal clients](image-url)
limited... and the demand is great and our frustration is that we continue to struggle to do proposals to get a position and then to satisfy a need at a time... for example, a counselling position... we needed $60,000 but only got $20,000.

(OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

The majority of Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations were dissatisfied with government funding to their organizations. Figure 5b shows the level of satisfaction Executive Directors have with organizational funding, while Figure 5d shows responses by city.

Participants who reported dissatisfaction with funding provided a variety of reasons, including both the amount and type of funding to their organizations. Respondents noted that funding was provided with very limited timeframes, and was different from the core funding that non-Aboriginal organizations received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

- Highest level of dissatisfaction (85.7 %) Thunder Bay
- Highest level of satisfaction (68.2 %) Sudbury
It comes down to systemic and social issue—we’ve known for a long time that Aboriginal programs don’t get the same amount of funding dollars—to me it feels like racism because we’re not seen as competent as non-Aboriginal agencies by the Government. I think it’s a competency level issue and we experience it every day. (THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

Aboriginal Health Access Centers like Mushkiki are not funded the same as the NorthWest Health Centre. I have been working for 30 years and I know that we are not funded at same level—not the same funding—less funding, less staff, equity issues and we are lobbying government—and that’s my issue and I know that. (THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

There should be sufficient money. There should be equitability in funding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. (THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL PLENARY SESSION)

Table 5c illustrates perceived inequity of funding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in Thunder Bay, Ottawa and Barrie/Midland/Orillia. Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations believe that they provide culturally-based services and are more accountable to the urban Aboriginal communities but these are often unrecognized and not funded by government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is funding equitable?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Accessing organizations in cities

In the RCAP research, round table participants identified several key service delivery areas which, they emphasized, are linked. Education, for instance, was tied to AIDS, disabilities and health. Addictions, participants said, had much to do with cultural awareness, poverty and joblessness. Participants from different cities reported different key areas.
of concern, but they said this may have had as much to do with the availability of government funding as it has with problems in their regions. The service areas they outlined run the gamut of social, cultural and economic services. The key service areas that require additional programs and services they identified are: education, addictions, disability, aid, homelessness, child care, social services, health, housing, cultural awareness/isolation, employment, and transportation (1992, p. x).

Sixty-six percent of the community survey participants reported that they access Aboriginal agencies. Community survey participants tend to use Aboriginal community health agencies more than any other type of Aboriginal agencies in the city, as can be seen in Table 5d.

**Table 5d** Types of Aboriginal agencies accessed (UATF quantitative data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social agencies</th>
<th>Health agencies</th>
<th>Other agency</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reported reasons that 33% of community survey participants do not use Aboriginal organizations are shown in Figure 5e.
Within the UATF qualitative data, 51% of community member key informants (in all cities except Barrie/Midland/Orillia) indicated that they access Aboriginal organizations. Eighty-six percent of this slight majority reported satisfaction with Aboriginal agencies. Sixty-three percent of these interviewees had accessed non-Aboriginal agencies in the previous year—60% of these community members reported that non-Aboriginal agencies did not meet their needs.

In summary, an average of 58.5% of participants from the community member interviews and the community survey respondents accessed Aboriginal agencies in the city. Their satisfaction with Aboriginal agencies is greater than their satisfaction with non-Aboriginal agencies in terms of meeting their needs.

5.5 Gaps in services

In the UATF cities (with the exception of Thunder Bay), community survey participants responded to the gaps in programming for Aboriginal clients. Their responses are shown in Figure 5f.

When the community survey responses are broken out by income, as in Figure 5c, participants with an income of $40,000 and over show the highest percentage of response to gaps in programs and services. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that there are few organizations devoted to meeting the needs of the urban Aboriginal middle class.

**Figure 5f: Gaps in programs and services (UATF quantitative data)**

- highest number of respondents (41%) note lack of available programs
- lowest number of respondents (2%) note employment programming

- Funding 30%
- Programs 41%
- Education 7%
- Other 20%
- Employment 2%
This finding is not surprising given that the majority of Aboriginal organizations provide programs and services for urban Aboriginal people with the greatest needs. As one focus group participant from Ottawa notes:

As organizations, we are all dealing with negative social issues for about 15% of the local population — where is the other 85%? We are not connected. There is always a challenge in bringing people together in community. (Ottawa Focus Group)

5.6 The need for cultural/educational centres in urban areas

The qualitative research suggests that urban Aboriginal people within the $40,000-plus income brackets tend to have need for cultural programs and services rather than health or social services. This finding was consistent across the UATF cities. It was particularly strong in Thunder Bay, where respondents emphasized a need for a community cultural centre. They suggested that such a centre could contribute to the Thunder Bay Aboriginal community in many ways, including: a gathering place for people to come and informally socialize; a facility to hold social and cul-
tural events, and ceremonies; a showplace for Aboriginal arts and crafts; a meeting place for Aboriginal groups; an educational resource centre to teach Aboriginal history, stories and languages; an interactive community museum; a day care centre; a cultural outreach centre where non-Aboriginal people can interact and learn about Aboriginal people; a cross-cultural resource where mainstream institutions such as school go on field trips; a recreational facility for athletic programs and sports leagues, etc. As the Thunder Bay respondents commented there was a large growth of such urban Aboriginal organizations in Ontario after 1980,

We need a community centre for Aboriginal artists to work on our submissions, portfolios, pictures… That’s the first task of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force — task number one — get us a building.

(THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL ARTS AND HERITAGE PLENARY SESSION)

We need to have a place (even our young children) and I see it — they want to know who they are as a people… We need a cultural place here with Elders and healers and it won’t be too difficult for kids to know who they are. Lots of us haven’t been taught our culture and history.

(THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

We should have a cultural centre here. The government funded it [the Cultural Educational Centres Program] when the White Paper came out.

(THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

What about culture and not social services? Problem of government not funding (non) social services. As opposed to people who are making a living and their kids. Is it possible to get something going? And would people put money into a cultural centre?

(THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

I’d like to see a cultural centre like the cultural centres at Manitou Rapids, Oshwegan and outside West Bay - I’d like to see one here in town where they’d have teaching materials, Elders, no political ties— not NAN or the Union- with an educational component. That could be self-sustaining, could be a tourist destination. (THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)
I think a cultural centre might help to get rid of racism.
(THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

It would be nice to have a cultural centre or interpretative centre run by Native people without political ties — keep them out. Run by a Board of Directors and bring in an education component. Not credit courses but, like for example, the Boys and Girls Club, it could be a camp too.
(THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

Importantly, The Circle of Certainty report by the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy also recognized this need and recommended the establishment of a cultural centre for families, Elders and youth in Thunder Bay. Research participants in the other UATF cities also supported the need for cultural institutions. They said:

There is a need for cultural events and opportunities for learning for all Aboriginal people and not solely for those members of the community deemed at risk. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Programs are needed for those who have not grown up in the culture to get themselves acquainted with it.
(BARRIE/MIDLAND/ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

- More Métis cultural events, dances and teachings
- More cultural events within the city
- More initiatives that teach and promote the culture
- More activities that I can do without having the stigma that I am poor or down and out
- More seasonal gatherings
- Fiddle contests
(SUDBURY FOCUS GROUP)

It would be a good idea to have our own multi-purpose/resource building. It could be used for youth, kids, elders, homeless, high school, medical, and police. The land wouldn’t be a reserve, it would an “Ojibway town.” We’ve all had so much negative dealings with the reserve system.
(KENORA ELDER’S FOCUS GROUP)
5.7 **In summary**

Given these findings it seems clear that the delivery of social services to urban Aboriginal people will need to be enhanced considerably to meet the identified gaps in programming. Moreover, delivery will benefit from increased cooperation and coordination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers. Having said this, meeting the needs of Aboriginal clients requires the provision of culturally relevant and appropriate services that are best provided by community-based Aboriginal organizations. It therefore follows that the funding support for Aboriginal social service providers should be expanded and then stabilized so as to allow for a long-term, consistent and adequate meeting of community needs in a diversity of areas. And as articulated in the following chapter on racism, anti-racism education is a necessity with its potential to positively impact on the many areas of community life in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interact.
CHAPTER 6

RACISM AND
ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

KEY FINDINGS

- Racism committed against Aboriginal people living in Ontario’s urban centres continues to be a major problem on both personal and systemic levels.
- Internal racism and discrimination among Aboriginal people is a considerable problem in urban centres.
- Addressing power imbalances in a holistic manner that incorporates education around anti-racism and oppression is essential.

6.1 The nature of racism

This chapter is about racism. Usage of the concept of racism has, in recent years, expanded beyond its original meaning of the practice of racial discrimination. A whole range of behaviours are now encompassed within the term. We thus have chosen to use the word to discuss a broad range of issues that pertain to urban Aboriginal people including; prejudice and discrimination, stereotyping, racial profiling, exclusionary practices, internal racism/oppression, lateral violence and divisiveness within the Aboriginal community.

The most common form of racism, that is, racism by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal people in Ontario cities is a long-standing and well documented problem. Several studies have been conducted into the issue in recent years including; Debwewin: A Three-city Anti-racism Initiative in Northern Ontario in North Bay, Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie (2004, Don Curry), A Community of Acceptance: Respect for Thunder Bay’s Diversity (2002, R.
Haluza-DeLay, Diversity Thunder Bay) and People Shouldn’t Have to Live This Way: A Report on Homelessness in Kenora (2007, Mike Aiken, Anamiewigummi Kenora Fellowship Centre). Even more compelling than words on a page of a report are the testimonials of UATF research participants.

I face it daily, it is subtle as well as blatant — buses, stores, the streets, the landlord – everyday life. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Racism...is expressed covertly through (having) less opportunities in school and employment; in being treated disrespectfully by staff and doctors at the hospital and social service agencies who entirely ignore the cultural difference in their service delivery methods. Overt racism is the obvious, but it is the covert that is hard(-est) to battle: The hidden agendas and attitudes. The school is rife with covert racism and shows in the many ways they (Aboriginal students) are treated differently...It is also apparent in the media, with its lack of positive content but plenty of negative focus, where Aboriginals accused are named way more than non-Aboriginal.

(KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Many organizations exercise exclusion in hiring practices. Many large organizations’ staff (personnel) do not represent our cultural diversity.

(SUDbury KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Everybody kind of went around, but no one wanted to talk about racism. They wanted to talk, but not about that. They, the non-Aboriginal participants at the table, kept saying that this was a social issue, not a race issue. (KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

Although the issues of race and racism are complex with many different definitions and interpretations, there are some common elements that most can agree upon. Primarily, racism is about power and the differential and unequal treatment of one group of people by another more dominant group, often on the basis of supposedly biological and cultural characteristics. As a scientific category, race has been consistently dismissed by the scientific-genetics community for roughly three decades now. Nonetheless, race as a socially constructed concept of inferior and fixed (stereotypical) difference continues to have negative effects on ‘ra-
cialized’ minorities, intersecting with colonialism and sexism to oppress Aboriginal people generally and Aboriginal women in particular. Racism therefore gives people of certain races advantages over others. Besides occurring in individual attitudes and actions, systemic racism involves institutional practices and societal structures that disadvantage or give privileges to certain people and not to others. Limiting racism to overt actions and attitudes obscures how it can affect peoples’ lives in a diversity of ways.

Chapter 7 of Volume 4 of the 1996 RCAP report, Urban Perspectives, begins with cultural identity and segues into a section on racism. Juxtaposing identity and racism is intentional, as racism has negatively impacted the identities of many urban Aboriginal people. The vast majority of respondents in the UATF research reported racism as a problem in urban areas.

### TABLE 6A Perceived racism between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as a problem in cities (UATF quantitative data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is racism a problem?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 6A Perceived racism as a problem between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by city (UATF quantitative data)

- 96% of Kenora respondents consider racism to be a problem
- 87% of Thunder Bay respondents consider racism to be a problem
- 83% of Barrie, Midland and Orillia respondents consider racism to be a problem
- 82% of Sudbury respondents consider racism to be a problem
- 51% of Ottawa respondents consider racism to be a problem
The results of this research point to the continued and wide-spread problem of racism in Ontario, whereby 77.6% of community survey respondents felt that racism against Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people is a problem (*Table 6A*). Importantly, as *Figure 6A* shows, racism is most acutely felt in Kenora (96%), Thunder Bay (88%), Barrie/Midland/Orillia (83%) and Sudbury (82%). Racism was perceived as a problem for 50% of respondents in Ottawa.

### 6.2 Where racism most often occurs

The 2002 Diversity Thunder Bay study found respondents reported that racism was a significant problem in the city. It occurred most often in three contexts: schools, public places and through interactions with police. Moreover, a coalition of organizations undertook a study of racism in Timmins, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie in 2004. In this study, survey respondents reported they experienced racism in restaurants, malls, stores and hotels, as well as within schools and universities.

More specifically, the UATF community survey reported racism as most prevalent in the following places: restaurants/malls (57%), schools (54%), the workplace (50%) and when attempting to rent housing (47%). Importantly, 70% percent of the respondents felt that racism was either a

![Figure 6B](image-url)

*Figure 6B Places where racism is experienced (UATF quantitative data)*

- 27% of respondents reported racism occurred in restaurants and malls
- 24% of respondents reported racism occurred in schools
- 21% of respondents reported racism occurred in the workplace
- 17% of respondents reported racism occurred with regard to housing
- 13% of respondents reported racism occurred in other places
constant (39%) or on the rise (31%). The results are summarized in Figure 6B. In addition, a significant number of survey respondents in Ottawa (64%) also felt that racial profiling is done by police and other officials.

The majority of participants in the Sudbury plenary session on racism supported the community survey respondents, noting the prevalence of racism in shopping malls. Plenary session respondents experienced racism most often when using Status cards and being followed by security guards and store employees. Several participants spoke of resistance against their using their Status cards to make purchases in stores. Also, respondents in Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Kenora reported being watched or followed in malls.

\[
\text{Racism is a part of life. It is an on-going challenge for me; Status card usage, covert and hidden racism. It’s all over the media — the white man is always the hero, not us. (Ottawa key informant interview)}
\]

\[
\text{Store merchants get annoyed when you use your Status card, you can tell they don’t want to bother and their body language is negative. (Sudbury key informant interview)}
\]

\[
\text{Racism is less overt, more under the radar — for example, tone of voice, poor disrespectful treatment, or overt verbal slurs. I am proud to use my Status card; however, when presented there are signs of exasperation. (Kenora key informant interview)}
\]

In Kenora, participants spoke of police harassment — how the police ‘tease’ and ‘harass’ them on the street, calling them names and telling them to ‘take a walk’ or get out of town. Participants spoke of constant harassment as well as a lack of police support when they are being victimized.

\[
\text{Yes. There is overt racism in the Kenora police force. (Kenora key informant interview)}
\]

This contention of racism of police in Kenora was documented in a report entitled People Shouldn’t Have to Live this Way: A Report on Homelessness in Kenora conducted in 2007.
In 2000 local police were involved in a scandal involving the beating death of an Aboriginal man in downtown Kenora...the charges were eventually dismissed...this led to calls for significant changes in the way the city police investigate crimes as well as the way they treat First Nations people.  
(2007, Mike Aiken, People Shouldn’t Have to Live This Way, p. 5)

Participants also spoke of police brutality, speaking somewhat vaguely of people being picked up by the police and driven into the bush and beaten or abandoned. One participant spoke of his cousin who was beaten so severely by police he was in the hospital for several weeks for injuries and head trauma, but the police claimed they found him like that. The victim would not speak out.

6.3  Racial profiling

Racial profiling is a key aspect of systemic racism and prejudice, and is manifested as the use of racial markers in assessing a person’s likelihood of committing a particular type of crime. Importantly, an overwhelming majority (87%) of community survey respondents from Sudbury, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Kenora reported that racial profiling of Aboriginal people by police occurs. Again, these respondents support the findings of the 2002 Diversity Thunder Bay report.

I have seen a lot of problems with the police; a lack of understanding of Aboriginal people generally and Inuit specifically. This lack of understanding results in racism. There needs to be more accountability for police who victimized Aboriginal people.
(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Aboriginal people would hang out at the mall but they’ve taken out the benches so they have no where to sit. When you go into stores you feel like you’re constantly being watched. People working in stores will follow you around so bad to the point where you want to say “I make more money than you, why would I steal?” You could be constantly followed around in a store or you could be completely ignored. People will cut in front of line of you like you’re not there. There’s an invisibility factor.
(KENORA WOMEN’S FOCUS GROUP)
6.4 **Anti-racism initiatives in cities**

The following quote from a *Toronto Star* article by Judge David Arnot speaks to the importance of anti-racism education.

> What the 2003 report on contemporary forms of racism in Canada found, and what the Office of the Treaty Commissioner fervently believes—and is demonstrating—is that when it comes to combating racism, education works...As the UN report reminds us, education becomes the real foundation, the real facilitator, of social harmony. (Judge David Arnot, Treaty Commissioner for Saskatchewan, *Toronto Star*, April 12, 2004)

Community survey and community member key informant interview participants from all five UATF cities indicated their level of awareness regarding anti-racism initiatives, as can be seen in Figure 6c. Nearly 75% of the total respondents reported that they were unaware of any anti-racism initiatives happening in their cities. The community survey participant responses differed by city, with Barrie/Midland/Orillia (89.4%) being the least aware of anti-racism efforts and Thunder Bay (57.1%) and Kenora (56.9%) being the most aware.

Moreover despite the general unawareness of anti-racism initiatives, one Ottawa key informant interview suggested the need to generate increased awareness of racism and its effects.

---

**FIGURE 6c** **Awareness of anti-racism initiatives by city (UATF quantitative data)**

- 57.1% of Thunder Bay respondents were aware of anti-racism initiatives
- 56.9% of Kenora respondents were aware of anti-racism initiatives
- 89.4% of Barrie, Midland and Orillia respondents were **not** aware of anti-racism initiatives
I think it’s important for various agencies in Ottawa to come together and create some sort of task force that addresses the issue of racism and raises more awareness about the issue.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

6.5 Discrimination among Aboriginal people

The data from the UATF study reveals that internal (and internalized) Aboriginal racism/oppression, that is racism among Aboriginal people themselves, is widespread and complex, and appears to revolve around questions of internally vying for racial as well as other forms of social distinction and power. Internal racism can take the form of a perceived claim to racial and cultural authenticity based on darker skin tones or involvement in traditional cultural practices respectively. Moreover, Aboriginal authenticity can involve state recognition of Indian Status and a corresponding affiliation with a reserve. On this basis, people may negatively judge someone who has had their Status reinstated under ‘Bill-C31’. Importantly, as is seen in the quotations below, internal racism tends to follow along the stereotypical lines of ‘pre-contact’ forms of Aboriginality, with authenticity associated with dark skin, black hair, connection to the land (reserve), traditional spirituality and other cultural expressions, and language fluency. Inevitably, internal racism results in conflict and divisiveness in the urban Aboriginal community.

My fair colouring has worked against me, especially as I was growing up. Throughout my youth I had to fight my way to school and then fight my way back home. I was a small boy and I learned to be quick and agile to avoid the other boys waiting to fight me. I believe that this discrimination, which came from the Native community and the non-Native community, was based on my skin colour. I didn’t fit in town because I was considered too dark by the other children; and I didn’t fit on reserve, because I was considered too light by the other children. I came from mixed parentage. My father was English and my mother was Native. (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

You didn’t come from the res (reservation), then people say you are not a real Indian, that your bloodline is not enough.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)
Other natives give us a hard time because we look too white; I have to always justify myself to them and others.  
(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

If you aren’t from the local First Nation then you are mostly ignored or it’s hard to break in [to the urban Aboriginal community].  
(BARRIE/MIDLAND/ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

My family has not experienced the same things that those on reservations have. We’re seen as ‘white’ and have been told as much by certain individuals.  
(BARRIE/MIDLAND/ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Discrimination is expressed between different Aboriginal groups. It seems as though there are perhaps historical conflicts between different families and/or reserves that carry through to urban centres.  
(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

People who are trying to better themselves are put down by other Aboriginals who say they are “apples”. Townies versus reserve dwellers… There are also family hierarchies of power like for jobs in Aboriginal agencies in Kenora or with Bands on reserve— if your family is in a position of power you get a job.  
(KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Tables 6b and 6c demonstrate that half of the community survey participants and 82.6% of key informant interview respondents felt that internal racism occurs within groups of Aboriginal people. More specifically,
69.4% of community survey respondents stated that they believed that there divisions between Status and non-Status Indians.

Figure 6g shows the community survey responses to the question, “Have you ever experienced racism from another person?” broken out by city, which reveals significant variation in reported experiences of internal racism. Participants in Thunder Bay reported experiencing internal racism significantly more (60.6%) than Aboriginal people living in Ottawa (38%). For Kenora, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Sudbury, approximately 50% of respondents reported experiencing internal racism.

Many respondents suggested that divisiveness in the urban Aboriginal community was an important factor in holding the community back from developing new initiatives. As one participant in a focus group who had tried to organize a committee to establish a cultural centre said:

I tried to organize a group in the city but was criticized by Aboriginal people...so I gave up. (THUNDER BAY MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS GROUP)

6.6 In summary

This chapter points the serious and pervasive problem of racism in its various forms occurs both on an individual, isolated basis as well as in a sys-
temic way and which functions to effectively oppress urban Aboriginal people. Moreover, we have also seen that racist thinking is being internalized and then expressed in divisive and self-defeating ways within the Aboriginal community. Much anti-racism education and activism is therefore needed to bring about an increased awareness of the devastating effects of this grave social problem and to promote non-prejudicial, equitable relations.
Chapter 7

Urban Aboriginal People and Health

Key Findings

- Walk-in clinics and emergency rooms are the main sources of Western health care access by urban Aboriginal people in Sudbury.
- The long-term and continuum of care services required for those suffering with mental health and addiction challenges are a major gap in urban health services for Aboriginal people in Sudbury.
- Seniors are also experiencing gaps in health services including: transportation, language, and prohibitively high costs for vision, dental and hearing care.
- Aboriginal people in Sudbury prefer health services that are culturally appropriate.
- Elders continue to be a common source of health care for urban Aboriginal people in Sudbury.

The findings for this chapter on urban Aboriginal people and health come predominantly from the community survey research, as none of the UATF sites held focus groups or plenary sessions specifically on health. Key informant interview respondents have, however, been able to provide some contextual background to supplement the quantitative data.

Although the term ‘health’ is used throughout the chapter, the local Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in the five UATF cities has broadened the Western idea of health to a more holistic concept of ‘wellness.’ Moreover, participants spoke about their use of traditional healers and traditional medicines as part of their wellness regimes.
7.1 Perception of Aboriginal people’s health problems in cities

The question of what types of health issues urban Aboriginal people are experiencing included a diversity of responses such as family violence and sexual abuse, alcohol addiction, and other health realities associated with unemployment. *Figure 7A* illustrates the community survey participant responses. Thus, respondents reported a range of interrelated health issues and determinants of health to portray problems facing Aboriginal peoples in cities.

Participants also spoke about health in terms of Western indicators, such as whether they had seen a health professional in the past twelve months, whether they believed that their health needs were being met, and finally, where they go to meet their health needs. The majority of community survey respondents (80%) had visited a health professional in the past 12 months.

However, there are some discrepancies as to whether health needs are being met, as shown in *Tables 7b* and 7c. Seventy-one percent of community survey respondents felt that their health needs were being met.

The perceptions of Executive Directors were also used to measure whether health needs are being met. Responding to a slightly different question, the majority (55%) of the Executive Director key informants felt

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**Figure 7A Health problems facing Aboriginal people in cities (UATF quantitative data)**

- 24% of respondents identified addictions as a health issue in the community
- 21% of respondents identified unemployment
- 18% of respondents identified family violence
- 14% of respondents identified sexual abuse
- 14% of respondents identified suicide
that urban Aboriginal peoples have unmet health needs. The question asked of survey respondents measures of the individual’s health need, while the one asked of Executive Directors relates to a perception of the urban Aboriginal community as a whole.

### 7.2 Addictions and urban Aboriginal people

The interrelated issues of addictions and mental health, as well as the lack of related services to address these issues, were a unique focus of the key informant interviews in Sudbury, Kenora and Barrie/Midland/Orillia.

Perhaps signaling one of the reasons Executive Directors and general community members had differing responses on whether or not general health needs are being met (see above Tables 7a and 7b) is that 60% of Executive Directors in these three sites indicated that the needs of urban Aboriginal people with addictions were not being met, with this finding highest for Barrie/Midland/Orillia at 88%.

Furthermore, seventy-seven percent of Executive Directors for these three sites indicated that the mental health needs of Aboriginal children were not being met, with response rates of 90% for Barrie/Midland/Orillia, 84% for Kenora, and 52% for Sudbury. These last two findings for urban Aboriginal children are particularly poignant when cross referenced with the Gotowiec and Beiser study, *Aboriginal Children’s Mental Health: Unique Challenges*, which reported that 20 to 25% of Aboriginal children suffer from an emotional disorder—a statistic up to five times higher than for the

| Table 7a: Survey respondents’ perceptions as to whether their own health needs are being met (UATF quantitative data) |
|---|---|
| Are your health needs being met? | Percent |
| Yes | 70.9% |
| No | 21.9% |

| Table 7b: Executive Directors’ perceptions as to whether health care needs of Aboriginal people are being met (UATF qualitative data) |
|---|---|
| Are your health needs being met? | Percent |
| Yes | 45.4% |
| No | 54.5% |
non-Aboriginal population. Moreover, in *Suicide among Canadian Aboriginal Peoples*, Laurence Kirmayer reported that between 81% and 95% of Aboriginal suicide victims have shown evidence of mental health disorders.

Respondents had many comments on the state of addiction and mental health care for Aboriginal people.

We really need a drug/detox centre. Midland has a huge number of crack users. I think we are considered the worst in Ontario. All of downtown is riddled with drug users. There’s lots of cocaine too. And we have all the problems that go hand in hand with that. There isn’t anywhere for local people to go for detox. They have to go all the way to the city or way up north, and that can be really scary for them.

(BARRE MIDLAND ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Eighty eight percent of women in jail are Aboriginal. They don’t belong there. They need help. They are closing down mental health facilities and you have to be jailed to get the help you need - something has to be done to change that. Their mental health problems are often misdiagnosed. Drug addictions, mental health, being depressed we don’t talk about that, it’s secret, it’s still unacceptable in our society. Anishnabeg make you feel ashamed for still having those problems.

(THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

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1 For more information see Gotowiec and Beiser, “Aboriginal Children’s Mental Health: Unique Challenges,” *Canada Mental Health*, Winter 93/94.

My concern is to get the word out, it’s OK to have problems, you shouldn’t be judged for it. White people have the know-how to deal with some illnesses, there are only about five specialists in the mental health field, I only know of five native psychiatrists and we need more going into these fields. (Thunder Bay Women’s Plenary Session)

Most of the treatment centers are reserve based/staffed and not appropriate for urban Aboriginal people and so it is a big gap that we don’t have a treatment center here in Ottawa. We also need programs that inform the families of the treatment that people have received which is needed for the transition back to daily life. (Ottawa Focus Group)

The findings from the focus groups and Executive Directors perceptions of the issues facing urban Aboriginal people point to a huge mental health problems for Aboriginal people in a number of areas including: a lack of trained Aboriginal mental health professionals; possible misdiagnoses with serious consequences and a significant number of problems related to drug and alcohol addictions. These are having a major detrimental effect on urban Aboriginal people. It is clear that mental health programs and services for urban Aboriginal people should be a priority of the health care system.

### 7.3 Aboriginal access to health services in cities

The UATF community survey respondents in all cities provided information about their access to health services, as can be seen in Figure 7b. There has been such a large increase in the number of urban Aboriginal organizations in Ontario since 1980 that 54% of participants reported the use of walk-in clinics and emergency rooms as the main access to their health services. It is important to note that the most common medical issues participants identified require preventative and long-term medical services as well as after-care. The most common issues identified include: addictions, mental illnesses, violence and abusive relations, sexual abuse, and issues surrounding suicide. It is clear that these types of medical issues cannot be addressed in an emergency room or walk-in clinic.

There is a lack of doctors and not enough access to clinical and preventative measures … preventative services are very underdeveloped. (Kenora Key Informant Interview)
Services for Aboriginal people with addictions require a two way street approach such that people who are affected have to want the care and services have to be responsible to the addicted person. Institutions are only available from 9 to 5, some need it after.

(KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

My health needs are not adequately being met. Accessing service like Wabano? Well, there are 3600 registered clients and waiting lists currently. Wabano was intended for urban Aboriginal people. We need a dentist, optician, after care, chiropractors, pharmacies. A lot of clients can’t afford vitamins & supplements.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Because there is one health centre (Wabano) with a huge clientele — they are overworked. They are doing a great job but demand is huge. There is a high turnover rate with doctors at the health centre.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Our health needs are not being met; we need access to family physicians as well as traditional medicine/healing practices.

(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)
7.4 Preference for Aboriginal health services

Both Thunder Bay and Ottawa have Aboriginal Health Access Centres: Anishnawbe, Mushkiki and Wabano. These facilities provide health-related programs covering a range of areas including: diabetes, smoking cessation, community gardens, programs for mothers and children, as well as other services, such as flu shots. Elders and traditional healers also work from these sites. In addition, all centres provide direct health services for urban Aboriginal community members, and are staffed by family physicians, nurse practitioners (in Thunder Bay), and nurses. It is important to note that 74% of community survey participants prefer to access health services from Aboriginal agencies.

The following includes some UATF key informant responses to questions regarding traditional healing and traditional medicines:

> At certain times I would prefer to access (mainstream) health services and not run into acquaintances or friends in the Aboriginal community. On the other hand, there are many services that I would only access from the experts in the Aboriginal community. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

> The Aboriginal agencies provide me with the cultural & spiritual components that are comforting. Aboriginal agencies also afford me more time — they don’t rush me. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

> Mainstream health care systems are not culturally sensitive. (SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

> We need an Aboriginal oriented facility that deals with needs in a culturally sensitive way. A Native organization should implement their own Native doctor and nurses to service the Native Community. (BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

> I do not like having to explain who I am all the time and have to justify myself; I get so tired of it; I get treated like a second class citizen all the time in a white agency. (SUDBURY WOMEN’S FOCUS GROUP)
7.5 Access to traditional healing

The data in Table 7E indicates that a majority of community survey respondents access a traditional healer to meet their healing/wellness needs. This is an important finding as it indicates a significant use of traditional Aboriginal healing practices in urban centers and points to a need to support these practices.

There are, however, some variations in community survey respondents by city. The majority of respondents in Ottawa (87%) and Thunder Bay (64%) access a traditional healer, while less than half of respondents in Barrie/Midland/Orillia (49%), Sudbury (40%) and Kenora (36%) have done so. See Figure 7c below for more detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you access an Aboriginal traditional healer as part of your wellness needs?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7E Survey respondents having accessed a traditional healer (UATF quantitative data)**

- 87.4% of Ottawa respondents reported accessing a traditional healer
- 38% of Kenora respondents reported accessing a traditional healer

**Figure 7c Survey respondents having accessed a traditional healer by city (UATF quantitative data)**
Traditional Aboriginal healers utilize a variety of traditional Aboriginal methods of treatment including herbal plant medicines passed down from generation to generation and spiritual ceremonies such as doctoring sweat lodge ceremonies to heal their patients. Some practices are geared to healing physical ailments, others to assist with an individual’s mental health. The concept of “traditional healing” is understood very broadly in the Aboriginal community. It can include such initiatives as using the Medicine Wheel to counsel individuals; using culturally-based teachings and therapy at Aboriginal treatment centres; holding “healing circles” to facilitate group healing; and restorative justice initiatives such as sentencing circles and community councils geared at reintegrating the individual into the community. The healing initiatives have in common the fact that they are rooted in traditional teachings, knowledge and spiritual ceremonies and practices.

7.6 Individual perceptions of personal health

Overall, 83% of urban Aboriginal respondents in the UATF sites (aside from those in Thunder Bay where the question was not asked) consider themselves to be in good (36.7%) to very good (46.3%) health, while only 17% view their health as being fair to poor.

Despite the reported challenges facing urban Aboriginal people (particularly with respect to medical issues that require preventative, long-term and after care), the majority of respondents view their own health positively, as shown in Table 7f.

| TABLE 7f Survey respondent’s perception of their overall health (UATF quantitative data) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Very good to excellent | 46.3% | |
| Good                           | 36.7% | 
| Poor to fair                   | 17%   | 

7.7 In summary

Because of an over-reliance by urban Aboriginal people on incidental health care providers such as walk-in clinics and hospital emergency centers, we see a significant gaps in health services for those requiring
long-term and continuous care, most notably those community members experiencing addictions, mental illness, violence and abusive relations, sexual abuse, and suicidal issues. Moreover, in meeting the health needs of these Aboriginal people, it is important to support and enhance the work of local Aboriginal health organizations in their delivery of culturally relevant and appropriate services including traditional healers who are an important element of urban Aboriginal health services.
CHAPTER 8

URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH

KEY FINDINGS

- Urban Aboriginal youth are experiencing significant difficulties with identity issues, education and employment.
- The interrelated realities of addictions, mental health and suicide are serious challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth.
- There is a serious gap in funding for supportive youth programming.

This chapter focuses on urban Aboriginal youth and draws on information gathered from the UATF community surveys, as well as from the focus groups and plenary sessions held in Thunder Bay, Kenora and Sudbury. It is noteworthy that only 20% of survey participants fall into the age category of 24 years and younger. This chapter outlines the major interrelated areas of concern for urban Aboriginal youth:

- Aboriginal Youth experiences with education;
- the unmet needs of Aboriginal youth; and
- the issue of addictions and mental health.

8.1 Major social challenges and needs of urban Aboriginal youth

Community survey participants from all UATF sites reported on the major social challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth, as shown in Figure 8A.
Although the smallest percentage of UATF community survey respondents noted racism and violence as a challenge facing youth, Kenora youth focus group participants presented a different perspective in their city:

*There is a non-Native gang in Kenora known as the KIB (Kenora Indian Beaters) which go after Native people when they’re alone. They are about 15 to 21 years old and are usually skateboarders. An Aboriginal man was beaten by the KIB and was hospitalized and is presently in a coma.*

(KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

*Youth are faced with racism when going into shops in Kenora. The manager will watch Native youth more than others.*

(KENORA YOUTH FOCUS GROUP)

The community survey respondents reported lack of identity as the greatest challenge for urban Aboriginal youth. The 2003 report, *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change*, also identified identity development and self-esteem as important considerations for urban Aboriginal youth, and it posited the following two recommendations:

That the federal government, in collaboration with its provincial counterparts and appropriate urban Aboriginal youth representatives and agencies, should provide capital funding for the estab-
lishment of Urban Aboriginal Youth Centres in urban communities where there is a significant Aboriginal youth population. Centres should be located in areas where they can be readily accessed by youth.

That the federal government, in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal organizations, should establish community-based, culturally appropriate urban Aboriginal youth transition programs. Efforts should be made to link Aboriginal youth transition services to reserve and rural communities. (2003, *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change*: p. ix)

Another challenge that Aboriginal youth face is trying to find employment. For example, in Thunder Bay, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Sudbury, the 2001 Census reported unemployment rates for urban Aboriginal youth were 44%, 38% and 36% respectively. Urban Aboriginal youth in these cities faced unemployment rates exceeding the non-Aboriginal youth.

The Thunder Bay youth plenary session noted the incongruence between the growing urban Aboriginal population and the visibility of Aboriginal people in the workforce. That is, Aboriginal youth make up a significant proportion of the youth population in Thunder Bay and contribute to the economy but experience difficulty in obtaining jobs. They suggest that there is a reluctance to hire Aboriginal youth, especially in high visibility positions in retail.

*We are the economy—we are filling the schools, we are providing the baseline for the health care industry. We are not represented in industry and everywhere you go there are no Native people working at Tim Horton’s or at WalMart and Zeller’s.* (Thunder Bay Plenary Session)

These UATF findings parallel those of the 2003 report, *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change*, in which it was recommended that

Federal programs aimed at increasing labour market participation of Aboriginal youth be should be designed to provide long-term, strategic training in accredited programs for youth.

Funding allocated to the youth and urban component of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy should be increased.

The federal government, in collaboration with all principal stakeholders, [should] facilitate forums and initiatives to encourage
8.2 **Urban Aboriginal youth and education**

To move beyond the unemployment statistics cited above, urban Aboriginal youth need to complete high school. Completing school can be particularly challenging for urban Aboriginal youth. The 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) found that boredom with school was the most commonly reported reason young Aboriginal men aged 15 to 34 did not complete high school, while pregnancy and child care was the most commonly reported reason for young Aboriginal women within the same age group (2001, Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey: p.4).

Community survey participants reported on whether or not they had to leave school for any reason. Slightly more community survey participants did not leave school for any reason (52.4%) than those community survey participants who left school (47.6%). Community survey participants reported on their reasons for leaving school. See **Figure 8b** for their reasons for leaving school early.

Almost one half (48.7%) of the community survey respondents reported ‘family reasons’ for leaving school prematurely. Approximately one quarter of these respondents (19.4%) reported ‘health reasons’ and another 19.6% of respondents reported ‘employment reasons’.

**Figure 8b Reasons for leaving school early (quantitative data)**

- almost half (48.7%) of respondents left school for family reasons
- 19.4% for health reasons
- 19.6% for employment reasons
- 16.6% for work
- 12.3% for other reasons

partnerships between urban Aboriginal youth and the private sector.

We drop out school because of an unstable home life and a lack of encouragement from the school. It’s like the teachers already expect you to fail.  (KENORA YOUTH FOCUS GROUP)

Challenges, good or bad... especially for Aboriginal people in the city, there are always challenges. Schools don’t understand the needs of Aboriginal students. There is much ignorance about Aboriginal people.  (OTTAWA YOUTH FOCUS GROUP)

It took a while to get respect of peers, even of the teaching instructors. Always felt like I had to prove myself. They expect you to fail.  (KENORA YOUTH FOCUS GROUP)

Too easy to quit (school) and then it’s too hard to get back in after.  (KENORA YOUTH FOCUS GROUP)

Drum with seats, because dancing is a big part of life and education, we can learn so much by being a part of the circle/drum. Sharing through dance and culture, education happens everywhere in all things at all times.  (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

There is an up-side and a down-side. I like the Ontario curriculum rather than on the reserve but it is hard because there is not as much access to ceremonies and culture.  (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

There is a big lack of peer mentoring in our schools. It’s not something that the schools are encouraging and they should be.  (BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA FOCUS GROUP)

The decision to withdraw from school early is rarely based on a single reason or incident—regardless of whether the issue concerns family, health, boredom, a need to provide child care or find employment. Leaving school often begins with students failing to attend classes because they are facing overwhelming challenges in their lives. Reducing the truancy rates for urban Aboriginal youth is a key issue that must be addressed (2003, Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change: p 23).

In summary, community survey participants cited three major challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth; lack of Aboriginal identity, high
rates of unemployment and leaving school early. These findings are supported by the Statistics Canada 2001 Census data on youth unemployment figures and the Standing Senate Committee’s recommendations for urban Aboriginal youth put forward in the 2003 *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change* study. These challenges are also well documented in the UATF data:

*The youth are so disconnected from their culture these days because it is not around you. People do not know how to be Indian, living in peace and harmony. We do not get the teachings at school or at home.*  
(Sudbury Youth Focus Group)

*I see these youth, there are piles of them. Not like when we were growing up. They have to be heard, listened to and accommodated. I think that Kenora and the First Nations around here are going to have, not necessarily a problem, but are going to have hassles. Nobody’s really paying attention to them.*  
(Kenora Life History)

*We should have an all native school where we can learn about the bush, mother nature, how to hunt, fish and gather plants, medicines, berries and to survive. Our curriculum would include all of these things in school and they would be for everyone not just natives. The entire curriculum would be native — our history, our culture, out grandfather teachings, extended families would be involved with the youth in the school so that we can create big families, such as aunties, grandmas, grandpas, uncles who care. There would be no racism. Everyone would want to go to an all native school and we would like school then. There would be no gangs. There would be no rivalry between groups. We would incorporate grandfather teachings in all that we do and we would learn the tools needed to address all of our healing, our emotional and physical well being. There would be Ojibway in all the schools.*  
(Sudbury Youth Focus Group)

*There is too much negativity in the schools; we do not belong there with them all. We should have our own where we can excel in everything and where we can feel safe and feel at home like we belong. It should be a good feeling like a family but it does not work that way. Food should be an important part of our learning e.g. why native people ate the type*
of foods they ate. The way we prepare foods for feasts should always be the way of preparing food on a regular basis with good feelings being put into the food. It helps us to balance our emotions and physical (beings).

(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

You have to get them involved and build up their self-esteem. From there you could use the tool I used, sports, which was basketball.

(KENORA LIFE HISTORY)

Youth dropping out of school before they complete high school is a predominant issue in Kenora. There is usually only one youth on the honour roll, the rest are linked with doing drugs, have unstable family lives, or problems with teachers who may have poor expectations of the students. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

8.3 Needs of urban Aboriginal youth

Community survey participants in all UATF cities except Thunder Bay reported on whether the needs of urban Aboriginal youth are being met. Seventy-nine percent of community survey respondents reported that the needs of urban Aboriginal youth are not being met.

The UATF key informant interview participants also reported on youth needs. They responded to whether there are gaps in services for urban Aboriginal youth.

In response to the broad question as to whether or not there were gaps in services to urban Aboriginal youth, 81% of Executive Directors answered affirmatively. Furthermore, a general lack of funding for youth programming (51%), employment and education services (26%), and greater opportunities for positive identity reinforcement (13%) were identified by community survey participants as being the greatest unmet needs experienced by youth. Their responses are shown in Figure 8c.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8A Gaps in services for urban Aboriginal youth (qualitative data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you access an Aboriginal traditional healer as part of your wellness needs?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus UATF respondents have provided a multifaceted view of the challenges that urban Aboriginal youth face in Ontario. Respondents identified the need for more funding for urban Aboriginal youth programming, more culturally relevant educational opportunities and greater employment and education opportunities.

Respondents identified the need for positive identity reinforcement, changes to the education system, elimination of racism and increased employment opportunities for urban Aboriginal youth. The UATF participant responses identify a wide array of challenges and needs:

*I would like to see more programs offered for Aboriginal youth... particularly, in the way of justice for young Aboriginal women. Overall, I would like to see programs and services which remain intact and sustained for a number of years, not just a couple of months. We have a routine (habit) in this city to start programs but never finish them.*  
(Ottawa key informant interview)

*There is no youth centre, so a lack of activity. It would be good to get youth involved in the decision-making of a youth centre.*  
(Kenora key informant interview)

*The activities in Orillia need parents to have money for equipment, participant fees, tournaments, etc. so many families with low incomes can’t send their children to participate in positive activities. Lots of*
families move to Orillia to work at Casino Rama, but there isn’t anything for their kids to do. *(Barrie Midland Orillia Focus Group)*

I believe that the children are at higher risk of being labeled a problem child, a special needs child and have higher rates of being treated for ADD/ADHD, conduct disorders and so on. A special coach who specializes in how to manage this type of behaviour needs to be established, and funded specific to Aboriginal children, whether Status or not Status, to help keep them in the home and out of the radar of CAS and the school. *(Sudbury Key Informant Interview)*

These findings correspond well to the overall recommendations of the 2003 Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples report, *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change* to move forward with a holistic approach which acknowledges the complex web of challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth:

The symptoms cannot be treated in isolation and must be tackled in a holistic way and integrated with programs that strengthen families. To be lasting, solutions need to be proactive and preventative, rather than only swinging into action once a problem or need becomes acute. And while we acknowledge that many urban Aboriginal youth are managing the transition to successful and productive lives as adults, countless others are battling with complex disadvantages. We stress that young Aboriginal people, by all indicators, are a category most “at risk” and deserving of the government’s highest priority. ¹

8.4 **Addictions and mental health**

Some people think that the Res (reservation) is worse for alcohol/drugs, but the city is just as bad (for alcohol and drugs), but it is not as visible because we blend into the neighbourhood where others are also partaking. There are young kids 8 years old taking ecstasy in downtown... there is peer pressure to take drugs. *(Sudbury Youth Focus Group)*

¹ Senate Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples report, *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change to move forward with a holistic approach*, pp.84-85.
The interrelated realities of addictions, mental health and suicide are important challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth. As previously mentioned in the Urban Aboriginal people and health chapter, 60% of Executive Directors in Barrie/Midland/Orillia indicated that the needs of urban Aboriginal people with addictions were not being met, with this finding highest for Barrie/Midland/Orillia at 88%. In addition, 77% of Executive Directors for these three sites indicated that the mental health needs of Aboriginal children were not being met, with response rates of 90% for Barrie/Midland/Orillia, 84% for Kenora, and 52% for Sudbury. These last two findings for urban Aboriginal children are particularly poignant when cross referenced with the Gotowiec and Beiser study, *Aboriginal Children’s Mental Health: Unique Challenges*, which reported that 20 to 25% of Aboriginal children suffer from an emotional disorder—a statistic up to five times higher than for the non-Aboriginal population. Moreover, in *Suicide Among Canadian Aboriginal Peoples*, Laurence Kirmayer reported that between 81% and 95% of Aboriginal suicide victims have shown evidence of mental health disorders.

8.5 **In summary**

From the community survey, quantitative data combined with the quotations gleaned from the key informant interviews and focus groups, we can begin to understand the many interrelated challenges facing urban Aboriginal youth in Ontario. Addictions, mental health and suicide are important concerns that coalesce with the need for positive identity affirmation, the lack of culturally relevant education opportunities and a scarcity of employment possibilities. Finally, knowing that Aboriginal youth occupy a significant percentage of the urban Aboriginal population and that there is a general lack of funding and programming for them, we can reasonably conclude that meeting their identified needs and helping them to develop into healthy adults is essential to building vibrant urban Aboriginal communities and must be understood as a strong policy and programming priority.

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2 For more information see Gotowiec and Beiser, “Aboriginal Children’s Mental Health: Unique Challenges,” *Canada Mental Health*, Winter 93/94.
KEY FINDINGS

- Adequate and affordable housing is a major challenge for urban Aboriginal people because of the high incidents of poverty, unemployment, single-parent families and racism.
- In spite of long-term residency and some degree of economic prosperity within a segment of the urban Aboriginal population, home ownership remains unattainable for the vast majority of residents.
- Housing that integrates a diversity of support services is required for at-risk members of the urban Aboriginal community such as seniors, youth, single women and their children and people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Maintaining a stable household is a challenge for urban Aboriginal people of all income levels, age categories and family situations. For some, their socio-economic situations drive the issue of housing as one of the most immediate and pressing needs they have given as housing is such a basic need. For those with a more stable financial situation, the security of home ownership remains elusive for a vast majority. The UATF findings reveal a broad scope of issues concerning housing for urban Aboriginal people in all research sites. Despite an emerging group of economically successful Aboriginal people in Ontario, stable and affordable housing is a persistent and unmet need and continues to be a high priority — particularly for those with a lower socio-economic standing.
9.1 Housing issues

Home ownership is an indicator of financial success and stability. In each of the five UATF sites, only 22% of UATF survey respondents own their homes, while 78% rent (see Figure 9A). Gender appears to make little difference in rates of home ownership, with 21% of Aboriginal men and 22% of Aboriginal women owning homes. Of those who earned above $60,000.00 per year, 63% owned and 37% rented their home. For respondents earning less than $60,000.00/year, only 17% owned and 83% rented. For more detail on the relationship between income and ownership, see Figure 9C.

Home ownership did not vary significantly by city for UATF respondents. Barrie/Midland/Orillia, Sudbury and Kenora respondents had slightly higher percentages of home ownership than their counterparts in Thunder Bay and Ottawa. This slim difference may be attributed to housing price variations among these cities. Urban Aboriginal people in these cities are still significantly below the home ownership rates

| Table 9A Degree of home ownership for survey respondents (UATF quantitative data) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Do you own or rent?               | Percent   |
| Own                               | 22        |
| Rent                              | 78        |

- 63% of respondents with annual income over $60K own homes
- 17% of respondents with annual income less than $60K own homes

Figure 9A Income and home ownership (UATF quantitative data)
for their non-Aboriginal counterparts, as shown in the following 2001 Census data:

• In Sudbury, about 50% of Aboriginal households owned their homes in 2001, compared to 66% of non-Aboriginal households. Another factor to consider is the need for major repairs. In 2001, 16% of Aboriginal households were living in homes requiring major repairs, almost twice the percentage (9%) of non-Aboriginal households. (Statistics Canada, 2006).

• In Kenora, about 56% of Aboriginal households owned their homes in 2001, compared to 73% of non-Aboriginal households. In 2001, 15% of Aboriginal households were living in homes requiring major repairs, compared to 11% of non-Aboriginal households. (Statistics Canada, 2006).

• In Barrie, about 53% of Aboriginal households owned their homes in 2001, compared to 77% of non-Aboriginal households. In 2001, 9% of Aboriginal households were living in homes requiring major repairs, compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal households. (Statistics Canada, 2006).

• In Thunder Bay, about 44% of Aboriginal households owned their homes in 2001, compared to 72% of non-Aboriginal households. In 2001, 16% of Aboriginal households were living in homes requiring major repairs, twice the percentage of non-Aboriginal households. (Statistics Canada, 2006).

![Age and home ownership (UATF quantitative data)](image-url)
The correlation between age and home ownership reveals some interesting trends. At 35%, people within the age range of 45 to 54 have the highest percentage of homeownership. Those 65 years of age and over have the second highest percentage of homeownership at 31%, followed by those 35 years of age and under with the lowest percentage of homeownership at 15%. For greater detail on the relationship between age and home ownership, please refer to Figure 9b.

The UATF research found that the average urban Aboriginal household is comprised of 3 to 5 people, as shown in Figure 9c.

### 9.2 The housing needs of urban Aboriginal people

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), estimates that about one in five (22%) of off-reserve Aboriginal households in Ontario were in core housing need in 2001. Approximately 24% of Status Indians households were in core housing need, as were 19% of Métis households.

Community survey participants responded to whether the housing needs of urban Aboriginal people were currently being met, with a strong

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1 A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards, and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three standards). CMHC, 2001 Census Housing Series Issue 6: Aboriginal Households, August 2004.
majority (78%) reporting that these needs are not being met, as shown in Table 9b.

Community survey respondents reported a variety of housing needs, with affordable housing identified as the greatest need. In descending order, the following needs were also reported: subsidized housing; housing for the elderly; transitional housing for both men and women; and incentives such as low-interest loans for urban Aboriginal people looking to become homeowners, as shown in Figure 9d above.

In an Ottawa based study on homelessness and the unmet housing needs of the urban Aboriginal population, the Odawa Native Friendship Centre in Ottawa estimated that 85% of their homeless population is comprised of men, and 15% of their homeless clients are youth. This report also states that issues of addictions, poor mental and physical health, and women fleeing abusive domestic situations, are the main reasons for Aboriginal people becoming homeless.

9.3 Poverty, housing and homelessness

In addition to the UATF quantitative assessment of Aboriginal housing issues, Ottawa and Kenora conducted focus groups on housing. Focus group participants revealed important dimensions to the serious need for increased housing services for many urban Aboriginal people. More specifically, the linkages between healing, homelessness and housing were raised in the Ottawa focus group, which led to a discussion concerning the criteria to qualify for housing programs:

There are many people who would not qualify to go into any housing, because of a lot of trauma. There is a lot of abuse in our lives and most of our people will not disclose it. All we will see is a drunk, (a) drug addict, and prostitutes. Budgeting problems often come from compulsiveness which is a response to trauma, which is historical and generational. There is so much healing that has to be done that must come from within.

(OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

They have to agree to heal, and they need a place to heal. Then there is the after-care; then there is a stable home (needed). They need a medical doctor, a counselor, just to stabilize. And so we are looking at a very big gap from the street to a stable home.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

There are not enough spaces in town in detox programs. Participants also spoke of the need to drink at night in order to keep warm and to kill boredom. Treatment works for a bit but most eventually go back to it because of stress, (the) strong pull of addiction and because it is almost impossible to live clean in the cycle of poverty and street living. (You) need to get away from that life if you are to stay sober.

(KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

The stress and limitations of existing housing programs and services was discussed in Ottawa, Kenora, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Thunder Bay. The housing program in Thunder Bay is now run through the Native Peoples Housing Association of Thunder Bay. Many of the Thunder Bay respondents spoke about the very lengthy waiting list for affordable
housing with both the Native Peoples Housing Association and the mainstream housing program. In other UATF cities, respondents spoke about homelessness suggesting that it was an important issue facing urban Aboriginal people. Focus group participants estimated that 25% of homeless people in their cities were Aboriginal people. One dimension of this issue relates to homeless youth. There was a need expressed for safe housing for youth in order to get them off the streets and reduce the probability of them becoming involved in gangs. In a Kenora women’s focus group, the need for more emergency shelters was raised as a major challenge facing Aboriginal women.

_Gignul is affordable housing with 173 units and a 2 year waiting list. We are constantly turning people away. Many single female parents access our services, but there is also a need for housing for men with illnesses. We have a major need for single men who are not working or who can’t get work and they are unfortunately on the bottom of the priority list._ (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

_An issue for single mothers is affordable housing. In Kenora, you have to pay a lot for affordable, safe and comfortable housing. There are no programs available for single mothers._ (KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

_There is no safe housing for the kids that want to get off the streets and away from the gang mentality — which is all about culture and housing._ (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

_There are not enough Native housing units in Orillia. There are 20 units, however the waiting lists are long and it is difficult to get on. The housing unit does promote a sense of community. As well, daycare and childcare options were expensive for single parents. The Orillia Native Women’s Association does provide some programming for children aged 3 to 6 during the summer time._ (BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA WOMEN’S FOCUS GROUP)

In Thunder Bay, participants spoke positively about housing programs although they waited several years to get into assisted housing, they were able to settle for long periods of time once they did. One dimension of this issue relates to homeless youth. There was a need expressed for safe housing for youth in order to get them off the streets and reduce the
chances of them becoming involved in gangs when their families moved into the building. For example:

One day the IFC called me about a home that had become available on Varsity. At Academy Heights I was paying $435/month, plus utilities. The IFC place on Varsity was $455/month including utilities, and I could walk to work at the University in five minutes. I stayed in that place for 13 years. Eventually I came to make too much money (too stay there) and I had to move my family out of Varsity. (THUNDER BAY LIFE HISTORY)

Racial stereotyping and other forms of discrimination by landlords were identified by 17% of the community survey respondents. Many of the focus group participants and key informants identified racism from landlords as a significant issue and barrier to housing:

It is extremely hard to find apartments for Aboriginal people; there is a lot of discrimination by landlords against native people. Landlords do not want to rent to families with children, particularly if you are a single mother. (SUDBURY FOCUS GROUP)

Mission for 2 months working at the Market “under the table”; can’t get anyone to chip in on a place and still looking for a place. Can’t get a lease because I am native that is what they tell me. On the phone it is ok but after I get there they say no longer available. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

Homeless four years. Same thing each day, discouraged and give up. One phone call after another, face to face and always the answer is no. This is what it is like to be homeless and looking for a place every day. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

Landlords can be racist in Barrie. In their minds Natives are high risk. (BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

There is a real lack of affordable housing and landlords will not rent to us because we are Native and because we are seen as undesirable because of our poverty and addiction issues. There is the circular problem of not being able to get welfare without an address and not being able to rent a place without being able to prove to the landlord that you are on welfare or have money for a deposit ... and so the street. (KENORA FOCUS GROUP)
The issue of housing is just one of many challenges that urban Aboriginal people face. While permanent housing provides some stability, a range of other services are also required to create a stable and positive environment for high-risk individuals. Housing programs must work in tandem with a variety of other social programs and services to deal with the specific needs of individuals and families:

Even if we got a rooming house we could fix it up and put the money back into it for Aboriginals instead of profit. It could be for women, men, elders like the “Na-Me-Res” in Toronto for males or like Council Fire in Toronto—it’s a shelter and they give you an allowance, referral to treatment, just like “Pignodin Lodge” here in Ottawa used to do. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

At Gignul housing we do counseling, social work, but there is a segment that we are not capable of helping as we don’t have the capacity, and they don’t have the skills to manage their home (budgeting, rent, bills and, food—general household management). (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

9.4 In summary

This chapter has revealed a diversity of housing needs for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario. For the more economically successful members of the community, home ownership incentives may provide the necessary impetus to attain the elusive goal of home ownership and stability. The Aboriginal poor and at risk population in Ontario, however, require an array of housing services that include affordable housing, subsidized housing, housing for the elderly and transitional housing for both men and women. In meeting the transitional needs of those moving from homelessness to more stable and safe housing, there is a need for a coordination of supportive services, including: life skills counseling, transportation, employment counseling, and cultural teaching.
CHAPTER 10

INCOME LEVELS, RATES OF POVERTY AND EMPLOYMENT

KEY FINDINGS

· In spite of the emergence of an Aboriginal middle class, poverty continues to be a major concern for the majority of Aboriginal people living in the city.
· There are significantly higher unemployment rates for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people across all cities;
· Aboriginal volunteerism is an important source of internal community contribution in urban centres.
· There is a significant lack of awareness of Aboriginal businesses within the urban Aboriginal community.

Income levels of Native people in Ontario are significantly lower than for the general population. (Urban Aboriginal Task Force, 1981)

In the Aboriginal community, either you are rich or poor. There is a big gap between. It is really hard to pull oneself out of poverty, but people do it.
(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

The 1981 Urban Aboriginal Task Force found that although urban Aboriginal people cited employment as a reason for migrating to the city, their income levels were not on par with the non-Aboriginal population. Twenty-five years later, the majority of participants in the current UATF study are more likely to be poor than not. Nearly half of the UATF community survey respondents reported an annual income of under $20,000. As educational levels rise for urban Aboriginal people there is an expectation that income levels will rise accordingly. However, the UATF research
has found that income levels have not generally increased with levels of education to date.

Many of the key informant interview respondents spoke of the persistence of Aboriginal poverty in Ontario. Nonetheless, UATF results confirmed a notable degree of economic prosperity among a minority of urban Aboriginal people, pointing to the emergence of an economically successful middle-class. This finding starkly contrasts the prevalence of poverty in the community.

10.1 Income levels and rates of poverty

In the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres’ (2000) report on urban Aboriginal child poverty in Ontario, the issue of poverty was found to be prevalent across Ontario for many Aboriginal people. According to this report:

- 52.1% of all Aboriginal children are poor;
- 12% of Aboriginal families are headed by parents under the age of 25 years;
- 27% of Aboriginal families are headed by single mothers; and
- 40% of single Aboriginal mothers earn less than $12,000 per year.

The findings of a later OFIFC study (2003) entitled, Child Hunger and Food Insecurity Among Urban Aboriginal Families, revealed the following:

- 79% of respondents indicated they worry about running out of food;
- 35% reported that their children had gone hungry because the family had run out of food and money to buy food;
- 11% reported that their children had missed school in the last month because there was no food to send to school; and
- 7% reported that they had been involved with the CAS because of food shortages.¹

Figure 10a demonstrates that the highest percentage—nearly one half—of UATF respondents make the least amount of money at less than $20,000 annually.

¹ For more information, see Urban Aboriginal Child Poverty in Ontario, released in 2000 by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.
Conversely, 22% of respondents for all cities combined reported making over $40,000 annually. This finding supports Wotherspoon’s claim that there is an urban Aboriginal middle-class forming in Canada (2001, Newhouse: 147). Wotherspoon notes that increased income may lead to a reduction of the worst problems (e.g. poor health, inadequate housing and transportation, legal trouble, and poverty) for urban Aboriginal people.

According to the 2001 Census, the rate of Aboriginal individuals earning over $40,000 is lower than it is for non-Aboriginal people in the five UATF cities. The 2001 Census reports that the total median incomes from all sources for people earning $40,000 or over is about 10% lower for Aboriginal people than it is for non-Aboriginal people according to the 2001 Census:

- Kenora — 15% of Aboriginal people earned $40,000 or more compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Thunder Bay — 15% of Aboriginal people compared to 28% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 19% of Aboriginal people compared to 27% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Barrie/Midland — 18% of Aboriginal people compared to 28% of non-Aboriginal people; and
- Ottawa — 27% of Aboriginal people compared to 38% of non-Aboriginal people.

The 2001 Census reports that a significant number of urban Aboriginal people, particularly women, who live below the poverty line as defined by Statistics Canada; that is, they have to use a larger share of their in-
comes on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family does. Further, the rates of those living below the poverty line are greater for urban Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people in all five UATF sites:

- Thunder Bay — 34% of Aboriginal people living below the poverty line compared to 14% for non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 26% of Aboriginal people compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Kenora — 24% of Aboriginal people compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal people;
- Ottawa — 22% of Aboriginal people compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal people; and
- Barrie/Midland/Orillia — 20% of Aboriginal people compared to 10% of non-Aboriginal people.

It is interesting to note the comparatively high rate of poverty among Aboriginal people in Ottawa, despite also having the highest percentage of people with incomes of $40,000 and over (see Figure 10b on the following page). Despite the common perception of Aboriginal people in Ottawa occupying professional positions within government or Aboriginal organizations, there are also a significant number of Aboriginal people living in poverty there.

At the same time, the UATF findings dispel the stereotype of all urban Aboriginal people living in a state of poverty and experiencing social problems. Despite the considerable challenges many Aboriginal people experience in cities, not all urban Aboriginal people are impoverished. Figure 10b illustrates the annual incomes of community survey respondents broken down by city.

The figures reflect significant differences between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern regions of Ontario with income levels lower in the North/Northwest than in the South/Eastern regions.

The theme of poverty resonates throughout the UATF findings.

I went to [name of institution] at age 21 and in that time there was nothing, and I was living on someone’s couch and if I went to the food bank to get food, it didn’t matter anyway because I didn’t have anywhere to cook it. So you get creative with other people’s space. I’d show up at someone’s house
with my food from the bank food and I’d say to them, “Hey do you want me to cook spaghetti for you?” (life history interview)

A life history participant from Sudbury also recounted being kicked out of his home and school. He experienced homelessness and poverty for four years, from age 16 to 20:

Through out this time my sister could not care for us and we could not stay. By the time I was sixteen my brother and I were truly homeless and at that time we did enough drugs that we lost our ability to even care about any of that. As long as we could find a couch to crash on, something to eat and spare change, that was enough for us to get trashed again, we were okay and we accepted the way we lived. (life history)

This life history respondent recently completed high school through the Indian Friendship Centre’s alternative school in Sudbury, but continues to live without adequate income.
10.2 Poverty and the Statistics Canada’s Low-income Cut-off Measure

One of the income measures used by Statistics Canada is the low-income cut-off (LICO) measure. This relative indicator of low-income compares the spending of low-income families with higher income families in comparable communities to obtain basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing. Statistics Canada uses the LICO to indicate an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family. Statistics Canada information, based on the 2001 Census, shows LICO information for the UATF cities, excluding Ottawa.

In Thunder Bay, Census data shows that in 2001, more than half of North American Indian children were living under the LICO, compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal children. A high percentage of seniors were also living in a low income situation—43% of Aboriginal seniors versus 2% of non-Aboriginal seniors. Many Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay rely on government transfer payments as an important source of income.

Government transfer payments include such sources as Employment Insurance, social welfare benefits, Canada Child Tax benefits, provincial income supplements to seniors, Old Age Security Pensions, Guaranteed Income Supplements, and benefits from Canada Pension Plan. In 2001, government transfer payments made up about 21% of income for Aboriginal people, versus 13% for non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal youth (15 to 24 years) and seniors (65 years and over) relied most heavily on government transfer payments. Government transfer payments made up 31% of the income of Aboriginal youth (compared to 9% for non-Aboriginal youth) and 65% of income of Aboriginal seniors (compared to 52% of non-Aboriginal seniors).

(Statistics Canada, 2006, Thunder Bay report p.5)

In Barrie/Midland/Orillia, the 2001 Census data shows that, ‘in 2000, one-fifth of Aboriginal persons were living under the LICO, compared to 10% of non-Aboriginal persons. Irrespective of the population group, a higher percentage of women than men were living in a low-income situation’ (Statistics Canada, 2006, UATF Barrie/Midland/Orillia Report p.6).

In Sudbury, the 2001 Census data shows that, ‘in 2000, one in four (26%) Aboriginal people in Sudbury were living under the LICO, compared
to 14% of the non-Aboriginal population. Irrespective of the population group, a higher percentage of women than men were living in a low-income situation. In addition, 37% of Aboriginal children in Sudbury were living under the LICO, compared to 17% of non-Aboriginal children.’ (Statistics Canada, 2006, Sudbury report p.6).

In Kenora, the 2001 Census data shows that, ‘in 2000, about one-quarter (24%) of Aboriginal persons were living under the LICO, compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal persons. Irrespective of the population group, a higher percentage of women than men were living below the low-income cut-off’. (Statistics Canada, 2006, Kenora report p.6).

Therefore for four of the UATF cities, more urban Aboriginal people are living under the LICO than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This disparity is most notable in Thunder Bay where half of Aboriginal children are living below the LICO as compared to only 14% of the non-Aboriginal children. The other three cities show that between 20–26% of Aboriginal people are living under the LICO. Kenora also has a large disparity among these cities, with 26% of Aboriginal people living under the LICO compared to only 7% of non-Aboriginal people.

10.3 Rates of unemployment for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario

The 2001 Census reveals significantly higher unemployment rates for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kenora and Barrie/Midland/Orillia and a slightly higher unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in Ottawa:

- Thunder Bay — 23% unemployment rate for Aboriginal people compared to 8% for non-Aboriginal people;
- Sudbury — 20% compared to 9%;
- Kenora — 16% compared to 8%;
- Barrie/Midland — 8% compared to 4%; and
- Ottawa — 6% compared to 4%.

These statistics reiterate the economic disparity that exists between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern Ontario. In addition, the 2001 Census data shows that Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have the highest unemployment rates in all five UATF cities. The disproportionately high number of young Aboriginal people with high unem-
employment rates, lack of programs and services, and consequent unmet needs projects a tenuous future for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario.

An examination of the 2001 Census data by city gives a more detailed picture of the challenges facing urban Aboriginal people.

10.3.1 Thunder Bay
The 2001 unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population in Thunder Bay was almost four times higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population (23% compared to 8%). Unemployment rates were higher for Aboriginal men than they were for Aboriginal women as illustrated in Figure 10c.

Unemployment rates were particularly high for Aboriginal youth in Thunder Bay. In 2001, 44% of North American Indian youth aged 15 to 24 years were unemployed, as were 31% of Métis youth, compared with 17% of non-Aboriginal youth (Statistics Canada, 2006, Thunder Bay report p. 3).

10.3.2 Barrie/Midland/Orillia
As Figure 10d shows, in 2001, unemployment rates for Aboriginal men (8.4%) were approximately doubled that of non-Aboriginal men (4.5%) in Barrie/Midland/Orillia. One dimension of this issue relates to homeless youth. There was a need expressed for safe housing for youth in order

![Figure 10c: Unemployment Rate, Thunder Bay](image)

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2001
to get them off the streets and reduce the probability of them becoming involved in gangs. Further, the unemployment rate of Aboriginal women (16.7%) is almost three times that of non-Aboriginal women (6.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2006, Barrie/Midland/Orillia report: p. 4).

For Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 23 in Barrie-Midland, unemployment rates were highest for Métis (25%), followed by North American Indians (20%) and non-Aboriginal youth (13%).

Unemployment rates were especially high for young Aboriginal women. Young Métis women had an unemployment rate of 38%, followed by 26% for their North American Indian counterparts. These rates were twice as high as those of young non-Aboriginal women, or young men in the same Aboriginal group.

10.3.3 Sudbury
As can be seen in Figure 10e, in 2001, the unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population in Sudbury was more than twice that of the non-Aboriginal population (19.7% compared to 8.7%). Unemployment rates were higher for men than they were for women.

Unemployment rates were particularly high for young Aboriginal people in Sudbury. In 2001, 35% of North American Indian youth aged 15
to 24 years were unemployed, as were 36% of Métis youth, and 17% of non-Aboriginal youth (Statistics Canada, 2006, Sudbury report p.4).

10.3.4 Kenora

As Figure 10e on the following page shows, in 2001, the unemployment rate for the Aboriginal population in Kenora was twice that of the non-Aboriginal population (15.9% compared to 7.8%). Unemployment rates were highest for Métis men (19.6%). (Statistics Canada, 2006, Kenora report: 4)

Among the Aboriginal groups the employment rates were highest for Métis women (78%) and lowest for North American Indian women (53%). (Statistics Canada, 2006, Kenora report p. 4).

Among Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 in Kenora, unemployment rates were highest for North American Indian youth (15%), followed by non-Aboriginal youth (13%) and Métis youth (10%).

10.3.5 Summary of unemployment rates

Thus, unemployment rates for urban Aboriginal peoples are consistently higher than their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the four UATF cities shown above. This disparity varied from four times higher in Thunder
Bay to double the unemployment rate in Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Kenora.

Youth fared poorest, (with the exception of Kenora), in that they experienced the highest unemployment rates among urban Aboriginal people. Unemployment rates for Aboriginal youth ranged from a high of 44% in Thunder Bay to a low of 10% in Kenora.

### 10.4 Volunteerism

Half of the UATF community survey participants reported that they do volunteer work within the urban Aboriginal community, as shown in Figure 10f. Importantly, many of the female respondents reported that volunteerism played a significant role in the development of urban Aboriginal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you volunteer?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
communities in the five UATF cities. Community survey participants in all cities except Thunder Bay also reported on their volunteerism within the urban Aboriginal community.

( Aboriginal women) are integral to ( Aboriginal) society, because of women the culture has survived despite oppression; because of ( Aboriginal women’s) resilience. The gathering, social fabric is because of ( Aboriginal) women. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Behind every movement for change there has been a woman. The fetal alcohol program was brought here by a woman; the creation of childcare services, health access and the teaching of culture. They operate strongly, but behind the scenes ... They don’t take a lot of credit. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Volunteerism has become important to the ongoing maintenance of urban Aboriginal communities. A participant in a Thunder Bay plenary session between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations expressed the need for organizations to grow through volunteerism in the same way that sporting organizations cultivate volunteers:

We need a way of finding more resources not unique to Aboriginal organizations and we need more people to step up and get involved...there are hockey coaches and that’s terrific, but we need more people to step up for other kinds of important work. (THUNDER BAY ABORIGINAL NON-ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS’ PLENARY SESSION)

10.5 Awareness of Aboriginal businesses in cities

As a final point of interest, community survey respondents were asked about their use and support of Aboriginal-owned businesses. The majority of participants (53.8%) were, however, not aware of Aboriginal-owned businesses in their city. Of those community survey participants who were aware of Aboriginal-owned businesses, 50% reported using these businesses. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of respondents said they would use an inventory of Aboriginal businesses if there were one available.
In summary

In spite of an emerging cadre of economically successful urban Aboriginal people in Ontario, we continue to see significant levels of poverty and unemployment in relation to the non-Aboriginal population. It is, however, important to recognize the significant contribution that Aboriginal people are making to the economies of Ontarian cities both in terms of the spending of Aboriginal people living in these cities and the expenditures made by First Nation, Metis and Inuit people who use cities as their regional cen-

ter to purchase goods and services. It is also important to recognize the extent to which members of the urban Aboriginal community, especially women, volunteer their time and expertise to support services, events and activities. The Aboriginal community depends on these individuals to organize events such as pow wows, feasts, socials, exhibits etc. which greatly contribute to the building and maintenance of the community. These ongoing contributions of Aboriginal people to the development of the urban Aboriginal community are often not visible to the outside community and are frequently not recognized.

**Table 10b** Respondents’ awareness of Aboriginal-owned businesses (UATF quantitative data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you aware of Aboriginal-owned business in your city?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10c** Use of Aboriginal-owned businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you make use of Aboriginal-owned businesses?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10d** Use of Aboriginal business inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you use an Aboriginal business inventory?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 11

Urban Aboriginal Women

Key Findings

• Aboriginal women are the most violently oppressed and vulnerable members with the greatest need in their communities, and they are also the most active and influential in working to end that oppression.
• Aboriginal women experiencing violence are not receiving the services that they need.
• Aboriginal women sex trade workers are facing major gaps in services.
• The lack of childcare services is a major challenge for urban Aboriginal women.
• Urban Aboriginal communities would greatly benefit from the support of professional associations and mentoring programs for urban Aboriginal women.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples highlighted the importance of the challenges facing Aboriginal women.

It is clear that despite diverse cultural backgrounds and places of residence, there are many commonalities among Aboriginal women, the greatest of which is an overriding concern for the well-being of themselves, their children, extended families, communities and nations. It is also clear that women who appeared before us are determined to effect change in their current life situations. The report lists these life situations as the Indian Act and the impact
of Bill C-31, culturally-appropriate service delivery with a focus on healing, women and children’s vulnerability to violence, and issues of accountability and fairness in self-governance. (RCAP, V4, p. 21)

The current UATF research also revealed critical issues that Aboriginal women face within the urban community, as illustrated by the following statements;

Many women are leaving the reserve due to family violence and then they go into the urban shelters and then face homelessness.
(Ottawa focus group)

Women leave the reserve for many reasons...because of a lack of power in band driven politics, to get away from violence and negative situations that makes things unsafe for women, for more opportunity, work and partnership...but also to remove the children from that environment. There was too much jealousy on the reserve and your life is not your own, they always butt in every aspect...both community people and politicians do this. I work hard to get ahead but then I am penalized by own community in the end. (Kenora key informant interview)

Gangs are connected across the country. Hells Angels are running with them and the police are very aware and crystal meth is going into Native communities. Once they are dependant (on it) then they are 'fronted' and the girls 8, 9, 10 years old are on the street and the money goes to Hells Angels or the Banditos and the police know all about it.
(Ottawa focus group)

In spite of concerted efforts to include men in this research, women respondents accounted for 62.7% of the research participants, as reported earlier in Figure 3b. The UATF findings indicate that 626 women were involved in the community survey; 165 women participated in the key informant interviews; 11 women participated as life history respondents; and at least 52 focus group and plenary session participants identified as women. Thus, at least 864 women contributed to the UATF research across Ontario.

Overall, the UATF research project significantly benefited from the contributions of urban Aboriginal women. All UATF sites held focus
groups and/or plenary sessions on women’s issues. As a result, data for this chapter has been gleaned from a variety of sources: women participant responses from the community survey; women focus group and plenary session participant responses; and life history respondents.

This chapter is cross-cutting in the sense that it examines topics covered in previous chapters, but with a specific focus on urban Aboriginal women. As discussed in Chapter 3, Statistics Canada data reports that more Aboriginal women than Aboriginal men live in urban centres. This is true of the UATF research as well, with women making up over 60% of UATF community survey respondents and 63% of the key informant interview respondents.

For the key informant interviews, women respondents outnumbered men respondents 2 to 1. Seventy-nine of the 247 respondents are women Executive Directors of Aboriginal organizations, and 86 of the respondents are Aboriginal women community members.

That more urban Aboriginal women than men participated in the UATF research is consistent with the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report finding that higher numbers of women than men amongst First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are living in urban centres (1996, v 4, p. x).

11.1 Family characteristics and marital status

As discussed in Section 3.3 of Chapter 3, the 2001 Census data shows that, generally, urban Aboriginal families are larger than non-Aboriginal urban families in the five cities and that there is a high number of single parent families, mostly headed by women.

In a report on urban Aboriginal child poverty in Ontario released in 2000 by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the following characteristics of urban Aboriginal families were identified:

- 12% of Aboriginal families are headed by parents under the age of 25 years;
- 27% of Aboriginal families are headed by single mothers;
- 40% of single Aboriginal mothers earn less than $12,000 per year;
- 47.2% of the Ontario Aboriginal population receives less than $10,000 per year; and
52.1% of all Aboriginal children are poor.¹

In four of the UATF cities (excepting Thunder Bay), the community survey revealed significantly more single-parent families than the Census data, with 49.6% for Barrie/Midland/Orillia, 48.5% for Ottawa, 41% for Sudbury, and 37.5% for Kenora.

As stated in Chapter 3, urban Aboriginal women are predominantly in the lower income brackets, with rates disproportionately higher than their male Aboriginal counterparts. Moreover, only 11% of urban Aboriginal women are in the higher income brackets, compared with 15% of Aboriginal men.

These findings have significant implications for urban Aboriginal people, especially women who are attempting to attain a stable economic existence in the city. With a large number of single-parent families and only moderate earnings, urban Aboriginal women face major challenges in finding childcare, obtaining employment and getting out of poverty, as discussed later in this chapter.

Another barrier to Aboriginal women becoming successful is their lack of education. Eighty-seven percent of Executive Directors of Aboriginal agencies noted that lack of education remains a barrier to the success of urban Aboriginal women.

Some respondents also mentioned that the timing of educational classes and training opportunities often present a difficulty for Aboriginal women who have to work and/or look after children. Support is required for women to take advantage of educational opportunities.

_There is also a need for parenting support groups. Mothers could learn how to raise children the way they use to. A lot of parents don’t know about these teachings. The supports for young mothers to get education do not exist. The only opportunity is to get a GED which at times isn’t realistic with a working mother’s schedule. The Academic Upgrading Program was offered day and night. The night program doesn’t accommodate for young mothers. It’s hard for some people to look outside the box and develop something that will work. Education gets into comfort zones, the same programs are offered unless someone challenges it._ (KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

¹ See also OFIFC, 2000, _Urban Aboriginal Child Poverty in Ontario_.
11.2 Poverty and unmet needs

This report has presented the many diverse and often difficult experiences of Aboriginal women living in Ontario. In terms of attempting to access basic services, many women expressed great frustration with poverty, violence/family violence, mental health and addictions, jurisdictional issues, and lack of capacity and empowerment. Respondents discussed the issue of service agencies and authorities having poor relations with women—particularly those women who are dealing with domestic violence and women in conflict with the law.

Some of the major barriers to success for Aboriginal women in urban centres in Ontario were identified as follows:

- persistence of poverty, racism and sexism;
- lack of treatment centres and detox beds;
- emerging addictions (crystal meth);
- lack of access to political processes, and feelings of exclusion from the urban Aboriginal community;
- lack of adequate housing services;
- lack of basic services for sex trade workers;
- lack of child care services; and
- increasing incidents of HIV/AIDS.

The experiences of poverty and social alienation are common for many of the Aboriginal women respondents. Some participants have basic necessities but spoke of feelings of exclusion from within the urban Aboriginal community. They feel neglected and in some cases mistreated by both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that provide the social infrastructure for many people. These respondents need more than what a single agency can provide.

With Ontario Works, some of the workers are especially dismissive and racist. There is an inability to understand and work with Aboriginal women, their cultures, and the diversity of people and their needs.

(OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

Another focus group respondent commented:

ODSP is even worse than Ontario Works. There are too many hoops, no access, no incentives; neither is there an adequate support system, (but
there are) preconceived notions of our people. Neither system supports the other. It is an illogical service delivery model where the clients are penalized.  (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

I am a survivor of the mental health system. I have been diagnosed as having bi-polar disorder and I am an alcoholic. We started a self-help group that deals with any mental health diagnosis and or drug / alcohol addictions.

There is a real stigma with mental health issues. I was involved in a documentary called “Crisis Call”, (dealing with police response and the mentally ill.) In the documentary I talk about having been sexually assaulted in hospital upon my first admission and the police’s response. They did not help, they did not believe me. I was heavily medicated at the time, and had no one to advocate for me. I had to live with that for 11 to 12 years, until I found someone who believed me, with it out in the open, I can say I have really started to recover from my illness.

Because of my illness, I feel I have been ostracized from the Native Community — I used to feel a part of it ... I used to be invited to cook and stuff for community events, I was actually involved, I fostered kids, sat on Native Boards ... and then after the illness hit, people just left me alone. I have been stigmatized and I am isolated.  (THUNDER BAY FOCUS GROUP)

Some women are struggling to make it in the city, and find that life in the city is not always an improvement over life in a First Nation community.

And you hear about housing on reserves and the water is no good and you think that it will be better in the city and it isn’t. I’ve been urban all my life and so have my kids and I should know better — it doesn’t get any better when you’re in the city and living here.  (THUNDER BAY PLENARY SESSION)

Childcare is one challenge as well. In Winnipeg, education was more accessible because childcare accommodated the schedule. Bus tickets were offered so that transportation wasn’t an obstacle. With the education in Kenora, it’s as though it’s built for failure. The government pays $100 for children under 6 which doesn’t prove to help those whose
children are older than that. It is also difficult finding childcare on PD Days. Childcare subsidies hurt you if you make more money. Once you make enough money to think you’re catching up, they cut off the subsidy. Single mothers end up living in the same situation than they were with the subsidy.  (KENORA FOCUS GROUP)

Child care is a very big issue; (I) have to stay home because I cannot afford a babysitter and there are no childcare subsidies available — there are not enough seats.  (SUDBURY FOCUS GROUP)

There are not enough Native housing units in Orillia. There are 20 unit; however the waiting lists are long and it is difficult to get on. The housing unit does promote a sense of community. As well, daycare and childcare options are expensive for single parents. The Orillia Native Women’s Association does provide some programming for children aged 3 to 6 during the summer time.

(BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA WOMEN’S FOCUS GROUP)

The Orillia Native Women’s Association is the only Aboriginal organization available in Orillia. There are no addiction counselors, no Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, no supports in the CAS. There are no employment seeking services (i.e. bus passes) or Aboriginal specific employment counselors. Overall, Orillia seems to be considerably under serviced in all areas compared to Midland and Barrie. There needs to be a satellite office of the BNFC or GBNFC in Orillia.

(BARRIE MIDLAND ORILLIA WOMEN’S FOCUS GROUP)

Women who are in high risk situations, who are in violent home environments, who suffer from addictions, or who work in the sex-trade industry have little support directly suited to their needs. Table 11a shows that 68% of Executive Directors of Aboriginal agencies recognize that women experiencing domestic violence are not receiving sufficient supports or services. Moreover, Table 11b shows that 61% of these same Executive Directors report that child care was not accessible for those Aboriginal people wanting to enter the workforce.

Women often receive some assistance from the city to deal with crises such as leaving a violent relationship, exiting the sex trade, and addictions. These supports are needed; however, women often continue to be at risk
because once these crisis-response supports have ended there are no longer-term supports available. Women are most vulnerable after they have left a program without supports to begin building a new life. Table 11c shows that 81% of Executive Directors of Aboriginal agencies reported that the rate of Aboriginal women’s participation in the sex trade is increasing.

The other issue that rarely gets mentioned is sex trade workers: Young Aboriginal women, and no one is working with them. Extreme violence is done to them by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

Yesterday I had a young Aboriginal sex worker who wanted a way out... but all I could suggest to her was a treatment centre. There is nothing else for these women. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

We see little support for women coming from the detention centres. We need more programs and services that are specific to youth: employment, sex trade, treatment centres... the waiting list for a treatment centre is four to six months. The detox centre is no place to be for a 16 year old. (OTTAWA FOCUS GROUP)

| TABLE 11A Support for women experiencing domestic violence (UATF qualitative data) |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| As an Executive Director, do you think there is sufficient support for women experiencing domestic violence? | Percent |
| Yes | 32% |
| No | 68% |

| TABLE 11B Childcare accessible for Aboriginal people entering the workforce (UATF qualitative data) |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| As an Executive Director, do you think there is sufficient accessible childcare? | Percent |
| Yes | 39% |
| No | 61% |

| TABLE 11C Rate of Aboriginal women’s participation in the sex trade (UATF qualitative data) |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| As an Executive Director, is Aboriginal women’s rate of participation in the sex trade increasing? | Percent |
| Increasing | 81% |
| Staying the same | 19% |
In Orillia there are no shelters for women. Many Aboriginal women in the community are in violent relationships and need immediate shelters. However, the current shelters have rigid restrictions that make it hard for abused women to use them. (Barrie Midland Orillia Focus Group)

Safety for young women is also an issue. Young girls are preyed on in the bars. Sometimes they are prostituted by their boyfriends to pay off drug debts. They are preyed on by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men. It has become accepted to take advantage on young Aboriginal women. It happens in every day life and it creates a vulnerability issue. (Kenora Focus Group)

An issue for single mothers is affordable housing. In Kenora, you have to pay a lot for “affordable”, safe and comfortable housing. There are no programs available for single mothers. (Kenora Focus Group)

One life history respondent has experienced sexual abuse, addictions and violence. The birth of her daughter turned her life around, yet she continues to struggle with meeting basic needs for herself and her daughter.

I remember how these good times came to an end when I was sexually assaulted on a regular basis by my uncle. The nephew that grandma trusted would coerce my grandma into partaking of the booze. As my grandma passed out, he took advantage of young me.

This began another chapter in my life where I ended up in numerous foster homes with a very unstable upbringing. My foster homes both Native and non-Native were in Red Lake, Minnesota, Whitefish, Sabaskong, and Kenora. I was placed in both Native and non-Native foster homes. I remember continual sexual abuse in some of these Native homes. I remember being back and forth between my grandma’s and these foster homes until I was 15 and in high school in Kenora. I grew up believing that sexual abuse was normal...

I had been hanging around the bars in Winnipeg when I found out that my grandma had passed away. I died inside that day. My grandma had died from a heart attack. A week later, I found the courage to attend my grandma’s funeral. I will never forget the pain I saw in my Mom’s eyes, when shortly after the funeral, the sister-in-law and brother kicked my Mom out of my Grandma’s house.
I did not see my Mom much after that. I drank every single day and was continually abused physically, mentally and emotionally by various men who took charge of my so-called well-being. It was during one of these times that again in a bar in downtown Winnipeg, someone had brought the news to me that my mom had died from sclerosis of the liver, a disease of the alcoholic. I had no feelings whatsoever about her death. It was like I had turned numb from all the pain that I had come to accept as a normal way of being...

I got pregnant while living the life in the bars of Winnipeg. I remember briefly having to go to the hospital to deliver this baby. I could not wait to get it over with and go back to my life in the bars. I do not remember what this pregnancy was like or even seeing the baby. It was something that I would leave behind that also left another deeper scar over all the ones that I already carried...

I have been given an opportunity to live my own unmet childhood through the eyes of this little girl. This little girl has been my greatest teacher during this time. It has been 14 years since I took my last drink and turned my back on that life in the streets of Winnipeg. It has been 14 years since I’ve moved to Sudbury where I continue my hard struggles as a single mother living on the meagre income of social assistance.

Because of my past injuries, I have not been able to work. I did make an effort to go back to school and complete my high school education. Although my daughter has given me inspiration to better myself, I have found myself struggling just to meet the ever demanding growing needs of my growing teenager now attending Secondary School. After I pay her rent, I have less than $300 a month to live on and I can’t afford any quality of life for myself or my daughter. After I pay my daughter’s school bus pass, cable and phone bill and food for our three cats there is barely enough to pay for food. (Sudbury Life History)

11.3 Women and community development

Women tend to be the more prominent members of the urban Aboriginal community as Executive Directors and staff of social service agencies. Aboriginal women are thus occupying a dual role in their communities. They are both the most violently oppressed and vulnerable members of the community with the most needs, but they are also the most ac-
A life history respondent from Kenora spoke about the history of her involvement in community development:

I guess a lot of it has to do with my real interest in, first of all, I guess, education. I also tend to be a little bit of, I guess, an activist, quasi-feminist [laughs] in that I’ve sat on boards. I was a board member of the [name of agency] and I also worked at Women’s Shelter. I worked there for about nine, ten months before I came to the college here. So, I’m quite interested in issues related to women and violence, women’s issues, education. I’ve also been recently selected to be part of the Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee.

So…so, I guess basically, trying to make this a better place to live. Not only for, well, I guess for all citizens of Kenora, but, I know that kind of sounds a little bit hokey, but I love this town. I love this community simply because, even though I don’t live in the area where I grew up in, right now, like Sioux Narrows proper, like the town itself of Sioux Narrows, I feel no connection to it, because my mother is no longer alive and so she no longer lives there. But Whitefish Bay, the community just south of Sioux Narrows, because that’s where my family ties are, my siblings live there, I have a strong feeling of connection there. But, Kenora, this is where my son goes to school locally here, my husband works at one of the local box stores, and I work here at the college. So, I feel like, I want to try and make this the best place to live for everyone, I guess.

And also, in terms of like, social justice issues, I think that’s probably one of the areas that I am really also quite interested in. Homelessness,
Another life history participant from Thunder Bay also views education as crucial to her community development work. She has spent her professional life teaching—in public schools, reserve schools, and, for the past 30 years, in the university. All of her work applies traditional storytelling as pedagogy.

I have worked towards cross-cultural understanding for many years. I volunteer in local institutions to promote Native culture. I often go into local public school classes as a storyteller and tell the story of how I got my Native name, Muk Kee Qheh or Frog Lady. Young children call out “Hey Frog Lady” everywhere I go about Thunder Bay. I tell stories and promote storytelling at the library as well. I lead a monthly session called Story Time at the Waverley Library. My sessions are open to all cultures in the city to promote friendly relations among all groups, and to share stories with one another. (Thunder Bay Life History)

Another life history participant also had an extended career serving the urban Aboriginal community of Sudbury. She balanced raising a family of six children with a 32-year career within an urban Aboriginal organization and volunteerism within both her community of origin and the urban Aboriginal community:

During the course of my career, I have participated in numerous community Boards such as Elizabeth Fry where I am now an honorary member, Lakeside Centre, Ontario Native Council on Justice and the Debajehmujig Theatre on Manitoulin Island. (Sudbury Life History)

One of the participants in the women’s plenary session in Thunder Bay also spoke about her community development work:

My interest is with the people who can’t speak for themselves—children, people with addictions, sex trade workers; there are so many organizations that speak so well but the heart is not really there for people who seek their help. (Thunder Bay Women’s Plenary Session)
I am working with the [name of group] and we put on the workshop for the Sex Trade Exiting on March 24, 2006 with a turnout of over 110 people from different organizations included and we put on the workshop. (THUNDER BAY WOMEN’S PLENARY SESSION)

From personal experience myself — just had the sex trade workers workshop and there is so much that happens to these women — and it is so degrading and belittling — police, judges, anyone they have to deal with. Empowering women is a goal that needs to be done, and advocacy with tradition and culture is important. (THUNDER BAY LIFE HISTORY)

A life history respondent from Ottawa spoke about her involvement with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies:

Aboriginal service agencies continue to play a bigger role, get (them) involved with mainstream agencies, expand the circle, initiate dialogue and develop a relationship with mainstream. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Some women are finding their place as volunteers within the urban Aboriginal community. As one participant from the Thunder Bay women’s plenary expressed:

I’m a friend of [other participant] and she is a mentor and I’m proud to be her friend. I was an alcoholic and five years ago I had back operation and I got addicted to pills. And I’m hoping to volunteer and work with Aboriginal people and Elders. I can understand Ojibwa really good and I can speak some of it. I’m doing some volunteering now, at the [name of] Centre you visit and at the hospital there is visiting too with patients. I’m involved in the Women’s Coordinating Committee. I’m just getting more involved now and I feel like I’m re-born again. (THUNDER BAY WOMEN’S PLENARY SESSION)

The various formal and informal supportive roles that women play in the urban Aboriginal community should receive greater support and recognition.
Importantly, many of the respondents spoke about their shared family history of alcoholism, abuse and neglect, and how their practicing of traditional Aboriginal culture has helped them to move past those hurts. These participants spoke about the need for more access to Elders and traditional cultural activities, and for the development of an Aboriginal cultural centre:

I’m interested in family things for Native families — I know they exist for kids 0 to 6 and during school hours — but that’s no good for my family. I’d like to go to something on Saturdays or Wednesday evenings. I’d like to go to a place to attend sweats — I don’t want it to be commercialized but I’d like to hear about it more often so I can learn and pass it on to my children. (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

I’m [other participant’s name] friend — she’s been a mentor to me and I like when she takes me out to these things. I’m not working and I do some volunteering at the kids’ school. I’ve been out of the workforce to raise my kids. I am in substance abuse recovery and I always felt before that I was unworthy and that I’m not living a healthy life and now I like doing stuff like that and getting involved and I like going to [name of agency/organization] for drumming. My son [name] and I just became dancers with our regalia and my other son [name] doesn’t want to be involved and at first I thought that he’d feel left out but now I don’t push it. (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

One life history respondent spoke about the importance of traditional women mentors in her life:

Traditional women mentors such as [name] and [name] shaped my spiritual life through their teachings at Women Healing gatherings held over four years under the auspices of the provincial government. I ‘found my place’, my spiritual home, through these cultural teachings for women. Through my mentors I began participating in spiritual celebrations and I has developed her own private spiritual practices.

(THUNDER BAY LIFE HISTORY)
11.4 In summary

To summarize, urban Aboriginal women tend to occupy two distinct positions in the city. They are the most vulnerable members of the community, enduring violence, sexual exploitation, mental illness, addictions, and grinding poverty. There are also the most socially active— as volunteers and employees of Aboriginal social service agencies—in working to make women’s lives better. Moreover, they have identified safe, non-violent spaces, daycare, Elders, and traditional cultural values as being essential to their long term health and wellbeing.
KEY FINDINGS

- Increasing numbers of urban Aboriginal people are making over $40,000 per year.
- A segment of the urban Aboriginal middle class is feeling disconnected from the urban Aboriginal community as it looks to participate in cultural practices and events.
- Those earning the most money (above $60,000) experience racism from other Aboriginal people the most frequently.

12.1 The emerging urban Aboriginal middle class

As can be seen in Figure 12a, the current UATF data indicates that 25.4% of the local Aboriginal population is earning over $40,000 per year and 12.3% is earning over $60,000 per year. Importantly, these findings suggest the emergence of an economically successful, Aboriginal middle class in Ontario cities.

Figure 12b demonstrates the differences between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern regions of Ontario. Thunder Bay respondents had the most (64.4%) respondents at the lowest income level, and Barrie/Midland/Orillia had the fewest (23.4%). Barrie/Midland/Orillia respondents had the most (38%) respondents making over $40,000, followed by Ottawa (32%) and Sudbury (29%). Thunder Bay (13%) and Kenora (16%) had the fewest respondents making over $40,000.
The existence of the urban Aboriginal class may, to some degree, be a testament to the success of urban Aboriginal organizations which have contributed to the personal success of a significant number of Aboriginal people over the past 25 years. As one key informant put it:

**Figure 12A Annual income (UATF quantitative data)**

- 25.4% of the Aboriginal respondents sampled earn over $40,000
- 12.3% of the Aboriginal respondents sampled earn over $60,000

**Figure 12B Annual income by city (UATF quantitative data)**

- Thunder Bay had the most (64.4%) respondents at the lowest income level, and Barrie/Midland/Orillia had the fewest (23.4%)
- Barrie/Midland/Orillia had the most (38%) respondents making over $40,000, followed by Ottawa (32%) and Sudbury (29%)
- Thunder Bay (13%) and Kenora (16%) had the fewest respondents making over $40,000
I have benefited from the services and moved on.
(THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Two focus groups were held pertaining to the topic of the urban Aboriginal middle class, one each in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. Many of the key informants can be considered members of the Aboriginal middle class (in terms of salary) and some of the life histories were of individuals from the middle class.

The study determined that some of the successful urban Aboriginal people (who are not in need of social services) appear to be moving away from the Aboriginal community, in response to the exclusive focus on meeting the pressing needs of the poor and at-risk Aboriginal clients. It may be that these individuals are reluctant to become part of a community where the only space to interact with others is in a social service setting for people who are going through the healing process. Or, it may be that they, for reasons such as the lack of relevant services focusing on their needs and internal divisions in the urban Aboriginal community, as discussed previously, consider themselves Aboriginal individuals working and living well in the city.

Not enough Aboriginal people pull together to help each other...we need programs for successful Aboriginal people to stay active and communicate with the community.
(KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Importantly, when internal racism is cross-referenced with income levels, the percentage of Aboriginal people who say that they experience racism from another Aboriginal person is highest (55%) for those earning above $60,000.

People who are trying to better themselves are put down by other Aboriginal people who say they are ‘apples’ and are rejecting where they come from. (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

It is true that many have disconnected from the Aboriginal community to be a success in mainstream and they are involved very little, if at all, unless they work for an Aboriginal organization.
(SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)
In Teachers College I felt I had to prove to myself that I’m (name) the teacher not (name) the Native. I went to the University and got my degree and then I went back to the reserve. And I didn’t like that and now I’m at the University. I have my Status card to tell me who I am and what I am.  (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

As well, many of the research participants had a shared family history of poverty, residential schools, family dysfunction, CAS involvement and a sense of shame of being ‘Indian’ stemming from direct experiences with non-Aboriginal racism and systemic oppression. One participant talked about the importance of the Friendship Centre in helping with these difficulties:

My ancestry is on my father’s side and he was a drunk and abusive and my mom would say that’s the ‘Nichi’ in you. I grew up thinking it was something to be ashamed of. And my sister at age 15 got involved in the Indian Friendship Centre. That was a huge change in our family. It was a very political thing at that time. And [name] was involved and [name] was involved, and the IRC helped people to “stand up and be proud”. And that just opened the doors in our family.  (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Another participant spoke about the importance of education in moving beyond the parameters of poverty:

Urbanization is a new phenomenon, in the last 20 to 30 years. What is needed is a supportive and strong family … education is the real key in this whole puzzle. You can see the changes taking place as Aboriginal people become more educated.  (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Economic success and education does not always provide a solution to the range of issues that plague many Aboriginal residents in urban centres. Often the traumas experienced through childhood, being children of alcoholic parents, going through residential schools and being abandoned, all surface despite working in a professional environment.

I found working in the office environment easy and good. I took liquor to work and it broke down inhibitions. I covered with Scope (mouthwash)
and gum. I hid my drinking. I was good at it although some of my friends, who could see through me, told me I was only cheating on myself. I only learned gradually, it takes time for me to reach my decisions.

(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Also, for many of the participants, their formal Western education and wealth is a first generation phenomenon. One participant spoke of having benefited from the early affirmative action programs in the 1980s:

Probably, since the mid 80’s it seems to be in vogue if you were of First Nations’ descent and if you were able to take advantage of it not through greed but take advantage of the system and did well. Today, if a young person is educated, (s/he) would probably do okay if they acknowledge their First Nations’ descent. (THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Moreover, participants expressed concern over the evolving role of the Friendship Centres from a transitional, cultural organization to a social service provider. As a result, it appears to them that the Aboriginal community and culture in the city is geared exclusively towards poor and at-risk members. Consequently, this group expressed a sense of falling through the cracks with respect to culture. The reality in Ontario is that there are some large gaps between those who are economically successful and those who are not. Reaching out to both of these groups is integral to building a sustainable urban Aboriginal community that can respond to the diversity of needs.

Indeed, respondents who were economically successful frequently indicated that there were not enough opportunities in the city to engage their Aboriginal culture. Some respondents expressed a desire for an Aboriginal school for children that balances academic and Aboriginal cultural curriculum. It is clear that, for some economically successful Aboriginal people, the city does not offer the kinds of organizations and programs to meet their cultural needs.

When cross-referenced with income levels, it was found that generally as urban Aboriginal peoples in Ontario earn more, their participation in traditional culture and Aboriginal events increases. Members of the Aboriginal middle class are therefore very much interested in traditional Aboriginal cultural learning and expression for themselves and their chil-
They tend to be supporters of Aboriginal art and language development, and appear to be working towards expanding the cultural possibilities of what it means to be Aboriginal. Many participants spoke of the need for Aboriginal cultural and educational centres that could provide language instruction, Elders and a variety of other cultural activities.

There is a need for venues for art and culture. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

One of the gaps government should fill is a school for Native people. (OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Somewhere to showcase the local history and culture of the Aboriginal community. (SUDBURY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

This segment of the urban Aboriginal population that is culturally diverse and extremely busy with their families and professional lives. Consequently, they have had much difficulty in coming together and organizing as a group for the purposes of creating Aboriginal associations or cultural groups. Some also discussed the issue of divisions within the urban Aboriginal community.

There are people from all over the place here. Not only people who have lost culture but from all over the place, and lots of history for people who have been here. There is no spearhead in getting this thing going. There are lots of activities out there. Hockey, music, dance and maybe they are OK with it. For the most part, there are lots of Aboriginal kids: in hockey when I coached, there were 5 boys and they call it the ‘Nish’ line. There are lots of things that they participate in. There’s bit here and there but no big centre. And who’d be leading it? (KENORA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

There are many professional Aboriginal peoples and there’s nothing to draw us together except in our professional areas. I tried to start an Aboriginal women’s professional group. And there were fights about who to be in it and who not to be in it. After 4 to 5 weeks it petered out. And the non-Native Professional Women’s Association ended up having
Aboriginal women as part their professional women.
(THUNDER BAY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

Conflict among Aboriginal people: (There’s a perception that if) you do not come from the res (reservation), you are not a real Indian; your bloodline is not enough. Conflicts exist between Métis and First Nations.
(OTTAWA KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW)

12.2 In summary

To summarize, the presence of an urban Aboriginal middle class is one of the more promising, and perhaps under-reported, findings of this study. Overall, however, this group is experiencing a lack of connection from the social service Aboriginal community and is looking to engage with traditional cultural activities in ways that are not focused on the poorer, at risk residents. More specifically, they are looking for language instruction and traditional teachings for their families that are offered within a cultural center, located separately from the general social service community.
KEY CONCLUSIONS

· While a great deal has been accomplished by Aboriginal and mainstream organizations to alleviate the problems of urban Aboriginal people in Ontario’s cities a great deal remains to be done.

· The jurisdictional confusion between the federal and provincial governments regarding who is responsible for urban Aboriginal people is a serious impediment to the provision of services and therefore needs to be seriously addressed along with the allocation of specific responsibility for urban Aboriginal people within ministries and departments.

· The majority of Aboriginal people move to the city from First Nations and tend to maintain links with their community of origin which suggests that there needs to be coordination of services between urban and First Nation agencies.

· Urban Aboriginal organizations require long-term stable funding to help them adequately meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

· There continues to be a significant need for the coordination of services for urban Aboriginal people who “fall through the cracks” suggesting the need for an integrated continuum of care model of service delivery to be developed which will require more effort to coordinate services among urban Aboriginal agencies and between Aboriginal and mainstream agencies.

· A culturally-based approach has been shown to be the most effective method of program and service delivery which implies that such an approach should be recognized as a legitimate technique of service delivery. This could be facilitated through the establishment of a series of Aboriginal Professional Associations such as a
College of Aboriginal Social Services and an Association of Aboriginal Health Practitioners to develop and oversee the delivery of programs and services to urban Aboriginal people.

· Many members of the “emerging urban Aboriginal middle class” are alienated from the urban Aboriginal community and need an organizational means to express their culture and reinforce their identity suggesting the need for urban cultural/educational centres be set up in Ontario cities with substantial Aboriginal populations.

· Urban Aboriginal youth are a vulnerable group in need of particular attention pointing to the need for such new initiatives as leadership training, peer mentoring programs, sports and athletic leagues, apprentice and job creation programs as well as a mechanism such as Urban Aboriginal Youth Councils to ensure that their voice is heard.

· A large number of Aboriginal youth of all ages are alienated from the mainstream education system and would benefit from a revised curriculum where they can “meet themselves”, the creation of “satellite programs” of the Head Start program as well as the establishment of alternative cultural survival schools in urban centres to more adequately meet their needs.

· Racism between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people as well as within the Aboriginal community continues to exist and requires serious attention including various anti-racism and cross cultural awareness training, the appointment of an office of an Aboriginal Ombudsman in cities, workshops for media officials and instituting Anti-Racism Committees in cities in Ontario.

· Urban Aboriginal women are both the most oppressed and vulnerable as well as the most socially active group in urban areas. The former would benefit from a comprehensive urban Aboriginal Women’s Strategy address their need including specific programs such as; domestic violence, addictions, mental health, life skills and legal counseling, affordable housing, childcare, cultural support and education and training. The latter group of women would benefit from the establishment of Aboriginal Women’s Professional Associations to assist them with their financial, professional and cultural lives.

· Urban Aboriginal people face significant physical and mental health problems as well as serious barriers to accessing health services requiring immediate attention through such measures as establish-
ing local *Aboriginal Health Boards* to oversee provision of appropriate and culturally-based health services.

- Urban Aboriginal people continue to access traditional healing practices and these approaches to health should be officially recognized and supported.

- Many Urban Aboriginal People are poor and are missing out on economic development in the urban areas suggesting the need for the establishment of *Urban Aboriginal Economic Councils* in Ontario cities to develop programs such as small business development training, capital funds, investment clubs and retention and advancement strategies to assist Aboriginal people to establish businesses and succeed in organizations.

- Adequate and affordable housing is beyond the reach of many urban Aboriginal people, especially women, seniors and youth, and they thus require dedicated housing programs and support.

Aboriginal people have been moving to cities in Ontario in significant numbers for more than 40 years. Over fifty percent of Ontario’s Aboriginal people now live in urban areas. In many cities Aboriginal people make up a significant proportion of the population of the city. The current Urban Aboriginal Task Force research project has examined the situation of urban Aboriginal people in five cities in Ontario; Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Kenora. It follows up research conducted by the first Urban Aboriginal Task Force in 1981.

In many ways, the findings of the present research project are somewhat disturbing in that so many of the problems that plagued urban Aboriginal people twenty-five years ago are still major issues today. In some ways little has changed. A significant number of Aboriginal people continue to struggle to attain a satisfactory quality of life and take their rightful place as citizens of Ontario’s cities. As the findings presented in the report have demonstrated, poverty, lack of affordable housing, racism, health care issues, unemployment, early school leaving, problems of mental health and addictions, family violence, high rates of incarcera-
tion and a lack of support for Aboriginal culture and identity continue to be challenges facing urban Aboriginal people.

Since the 1981 Task Force many Aboriginal organizations have been established to address urban Aboriginal issues and substantial government funding has been allocated to a myriad of programs and services directed toward urban Aboriginal people. But despite the substantial number of Aboriginal and mainstream agencies in Ontario’s cities that exist to address these needs and significant federal and provincial government funding, the UATF research has demonstrated that there exists significant gaps and lack of coordination in services. Respondents reported that governments have consistently avoided developing ministry structures with a mandate for long-term, stable programs and services with adequate funding to address the needs of urban Aboriginal people. In addition, existing programs and funding formulas sometimes do not “fit” the needs of service organizations or their clients. There is also a regional disparity for urban Aboriginal people regarding a number of factors between North/Northwestern and South/Eastern Ontario cities. Clearly, new thinking and new initiatives are required to address the issues and enhance the situation of all sectors of the urban Aboriginal community.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that there are numerous success stories including the emergence of an urban Aboriginal middle class and many programs and services offered have been effective in alleviating the social and economic issues facing urban Aboriginal people. It is clear that government funding has often been effective in assisting Aboriginal and mainstream agencies in their work.

The remainder of this chapter provides an analysis of the key issues and sets out a number of conclusions based on the analysis. It is organized according to the major topics of the research. The conclusions are intended as suggestions as to how to address the issues facing urban Aboriginal people in Ontario’s cities and improve their overall situation. They emerge from the ideas presented by participants in the study.

1 For a more detailed discussion and specific recommendations pertaining to each of the research sites, see the individual reports.
The issues of a lack of government mandate for urban Aboriginal people and the lack of coordination among levels of government are long-standing and have been recognized by Aboriginal people and governments alike for many years. Thus, ten years ago the federal government’s Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan recognized the “serious socio-economic conditions that many urban Aboriginal people are facing.” It also recognized that the thorny problem of inter-governmental jurisdiction was blocking initiatives to address the problem suggesting that “shared objectives for addressing Aboriginal issues can only be achieved if all levels of government work cooperatively with each other and Aboriginal people. We need to move beyond debates and disagreements over jurisdiction and responsibilities.” Yet, in many areas jurisdictional issues remain an impediment to action and government attention and funding has tended to focus more on First Nations’ issues than those of urban Aboriginal people. It is fair to say that urban Aboriginal people remain a neglected constituent of the overall Aboriginal population in Ontario.

The study participants were clear that there can be no solution to the problems articulated above without the involvement of all levels of government. All levels of government are providing significant amounts of funding to a wide diversity of programs and services for urban Aboriginal people. At the same time, it is estimated that a large majority (90%) of federal and provincial government funding goes to First Nations to provide services to their members (2006, Helin, Dances with Dependency, p.175).

In addition, research respondents underlined the jurisdictional confusion and barriers that currently exist, which inhibit effectively meeting urban Aboriginal peoples’ needs and that relate to government mandates, programs, funding and coordination. Many individuals emphasized the fundamental problem that there is insufficient recognition of the changing demographics of Aboriginal peoples by government departments or ministries at all levels. There is little acknowledgement of the significant numbers of Aboriginal people living in cities, and only recently have governments acknowledged that they have a role to play in providing programs and services to urban Aboriginal people. Meanwhile, the federal government has a recognized jurisdictional responsibility for ‘Indians and lands reserved for Indians’ under section 91(24) of the British North American Act, and some provincial laws apply on-reserve through section 88 of the Indian Act in particular circumstances. Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution

13.1 Government mandate, funding and coordination
The Act recognizes existing Aboriginal and treaty rights but is restricted to Status Indians, Inuit and Métis. It remains problematic that federal and provincial governments have not established a comprehensive, political relationship with urban Aboriginal people. It can be concluded from the study that there is a need for the federal government to formally recognize urban Aboriginal people.

As stated previously, both the federal and provincial governments have recognized the need to address jurisdictional issues and the necessity for greater cooperation and coordination regarding urban Aboriginal people. One important consideration in the jurisdictional issue is whether to take an “Aboriginal rights approach” based on an interpretation of Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act pertaining to government accountability for urban Aboriginal people, or to take a “needs-based” approach assuming that provision of programs and services in urban areas is based on the fact that urban Aboriginal people face a series of problems that must be addressed on the same basis as any other citizen. In addition, many of the funding initiatives currently in place are provided to individual First Nations and Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3, Union of Ontario Indians, etc.) but very few directly with urban Aboriginal organizations.

It is also clear that the time has come for both levels of government, federal and provincial, to act as responsible partners with Aboriginal people in determining their roles and responsibilities within their relationships with urban Aboriginal organizations and agencies. This commitment needs to involve more than short-term programs, projects or other temporary initiatives. It is critical that the organizations with the experience and expertise, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, be involved in working with governments to strengthen their services and develop new models of program and service delivery and even new agencies (or new coalitions of existing organizations) be established.

A second concern relates to the lack of coordination among the levels of government with different level of government “passing the buck” for responsibility for urban Aboriginal peoples. Despite the talk there is little systematic coordination.

In addition, the research discovered that, in many instances, there is little coordination among the large number of government programs available. There are “programs,” “technical assistance,” “grants,” “pilot projects” etc. available but often agencies are unaware of them. Sometimes there is also a lack of “fit” between the mandate of the gov-
ernment program and the needs of social service agencies. Also, the programs are usually short-term and heavily bureaucratic in terms of application, administration, and evaluation. Key informants frequently mentioned the onerous application, reporting, and evaluation requirements as significant burdens on their organizational capacity.

There was also concern that there is a disparity in programs and funding between on and off-reserve communities with on-reserve programs receiving more government support than off-reserve organizations and programs.

Some research participants mentioned that government ministries and departments sometimes claim that they would like to develop Aboriginal specific programs but that they had no data documenting the number of Aboriginal people they serve. There currently is no general database of reliable statistics to determine the number of Aboriginal people participating in particular programming areas (although the OFIFC does have program-specific databases for most of the programs it administers). They mentioned that restrictions on gathering ‘race based’ information on documents such as application forms inhibit them from collecting this kind of specific data. However, there are examples where such data is collected using self-identifying information (university applications, Aboriginal students in some school jurisdictions etc.). It is important that regulations designed to protect the privacy of Aboriginal people not be used against them in terms of contributing to the blocking of programs designed to meet their needs. There is a need to examine policies to allow for Aboriginal people to self-identify where applicable.

Perhaps the most important issue for urban Aboriginal agencies is the lack of stable, long-term organizational funding. Many agencies receive substantial program dollars but not core funding to support the administration function of their organization (Friendship Centres are an exception but have had little increase in funding in many years). Aboriginal agencies are often forced to rely on program funding which is often limited and very time consuming to administer because of onerous application processes and extensive reporting and evaluation requirements. Furthermore, each government program has its own mandates and criteria and rules for how to access funding. There are attempts to address the problems at the government level but at times their mandate restricts what they can do.

Respondents suggested that the time has come for governments to shift their policy and program priorities to recognize the pressing
needs of urban Aboriginal people. At the same time, governments are searching for ways to more adequately respond. For example, the federal government has recently renewed the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and the Ontario government has included urban Aboriginal people in its *Ontario’s New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs* (2005) and the recently announced *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* including a new education framework which includes a number of educational initiatives that should greatly assist Aboriginal youth. In addition, new provincial government initiatives such as the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINS) are emphasizing the need for “horizontality” and cooperation among existing service providers to maximize efficiency, coordination and effectiveness. Additional resources, creative thinking and new approaches will be required to take advantage of these opportunities. In addition, new relationships among the various stakeholders will need to be established.

It can be concluded from these concerns that there is a need for a coordinated *Urban Aboriginal Framework* developed to address urban Aboriginal issues. The government of Canada and the government of Ontario need to resolve the jurisdictional issues regarding responsibility for urban Aboriginal people with a view to clarify accountability and negotiate an appropriate division of program and fiscal responsibilities among levels of government for urban Aboriginal people. In addition, there is a need for all levels of government to establish dedicated units within departments and ministries to assume responsibility for urban Aboriginal people to ensure that policies and programs are developed. In this regard, the allocation of stable long-term funding to organizations providing services to urban Aboriginal people is necessary. In this endeavour it is important that governments work in partnership with urban Aboriginal organizations to effectively address the needs identified in this report.

### 13.2 Urban migration and transition to urban life

Perhaps the most important finding of the Task Force Study is the fact that despite the long history of Aboriginal people coming to cities in Ontario and the significant number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social service agencies in place to meet their needs that such significant social problems continue to plague Aboriginal people in the city. These
Concerns have been raised in various reports over the years and people are well aware of them. An infrastructure of Aboriginal social service agencies has grown up over the years to address the issues and, increasingly, mainstream agencies are stepping up to service the needs of their growing number of Aboriginal clients. Undoubtedly progress has been made but much remains to be done. In part, the problems continue to exist because of the significant number of Aboriginal people coming to the city. Newcomers, often young people and women from northern First Nation communities, with little urban experience, low levels of education and few marketable skills continue to move to urban areas.

Aboriginal newcomers often immediately face major struggles of adjustment to the city including meeting such basic needs as housing, orientation to the city, transportation, lack of income and social support. They sometimes possess little awareness of urban life and lack information about services available to them. If this initial experience with the city is negative long-term adjustment will be more difficult. It can be concluded that there needs to be a system in place to meet the immediate transition needs, the first phase of urban migration, to ensure that the adjustment process from the outset is a positive one.

Most Aboriginal people move to urban areas from First Nations communities and maintain connections with them after moving to the city. Ideally, the process of adjustment to the urban area should begin before the individual moves to the city and contact with the community of origin should continue after the move. Currently there is little coordination of services between First Nation and urban organizations. Given the importance of the relationship between the rural and urban communities it is desirable that increased cooperation between First Nation and urban agencies be established to contribute to a seamless move from the reserve to the city and the maintenance of positive connections. As an OFIFC study of urban Aboriginal homelessness entitled, *Urban Aboriginal Homeless Initiative Final Report*, recommended, “[f]or some First Nations/Inuit/Métis homeless people it is important to reconnect with their home communities—which they may have left because of abuse, violence, substance abuse, rejection etc., as a result, strategies are needed to re-engage their home communities in welcoming people home”. (2006a OFIFC)

As a first step to address this issue study participants suggested that urban Aboriginal agencies contact their counterparts in First Nations and enter into discussions with a view of establishing relationships and even-
ultimately develop protocols to provide programs and services to members of the First Nations who move to nearby cities, including orientation programs to potential urban Aboriginal people before they move to the city and programs to foster positive connections to the community of origin.

A related finding pertains to the need to coordinate services in order to ensure an integrated and thorough approach to assist individuals during their initial transition to the city. Participants in the study spoke of the need for a seamless and holistic process to meet newcomers needs when they first come as well as their long-term adjustment. This will require a great deal of coordination and cooperation among agencies, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and the establishment of new working relationships. For example, protocols and connections would ideally be established between urban Aboriginal organizations and First Nations as well as government ministries and departments and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies to establish programs to prepare potential migrants to come to the city and provide services when they first arrive including meeting them, providing them with basic needs such as housing and food as well as an orientation to the city. As well, increasingly First Nations are becoming open to accepting responsibility for members of their communities who migrate to urban areas (although practical issues remain). New models of service delivery are emerging that should be studied to ascertain best and promising practices.

It can be concluded that a registration process could be established to more effectively keep track of newcomers and their needs in the city. If the individual does have family or other supports in the city the services could include assisting the family in their support of the recent arrival for a period of time. Respondents indicated that this positive experience could have the effect of steering youth away from the all too common phenomenon of getting drawn in with peer groups that might be involved with drugs or gangs. Similar programs were mentioned that could be available for other groups who face similar transition pressures when coming to the city such as individuals released from prison or women leaving shelters. Some participants felt that this issue could be addressed through the establishment of an Urban Aboriginal Registry to register Aboriginal people, both newly arrived and long-term residents, who are in need of services with a view to developing a roster of Aboriginal people in order to coordinate services over the long-term. This would entail all social service agencies, health units and educational institutions keep-
ing track of their Aboriginal clients/students from the time they apply for services or enroll in order to have an accurate record of the number and percentage of Aboriginal clients contacted by the organization.

Finally, the study also indicates that individuals need to have their long-term integration needs addressed, integration both into the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in the urban areas. A major finding of the study was that there exist a large number of long-term Aboriginal residents of Ontario cities who continue to face serious problems and require programs and services. A different set of services will be required including assistance in such areas as, education, training, employment, peer mentoring, supporting Aboriginal culture, affordable long-term housing, access to health service (including acquisition of a family doctor and access to traditional healers), adequate financial resources, recreational programs, the ability to cope with racism and the development of stable healthy relationships.

The development of services that effectively address all three phases of urban life—immediate transition, short-term adjustment, and long-term integration—will obviously require significant changes to the processes and services that are currently available. Many agencies, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, currently exist to meet many of these needs. But the kind of seamless, coordinated and integrated continuum of care model articulated by participants currently does not exist. Services are not effectively coordinated, there are gaps in services and individuals sometimes fall between the cracks.

13.3 Agency coordination and provision of culturally-based services

An important barrier to providing the continuum of care suggested by study participants is the current lack of coordination among agencies, especially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies. This is not unusual as organizations develop and grow based on meeting specific needs with specialized mandates, often according to funding priorities of governments. The issue is particularly pressing now as more and more non-Aboriginal agencies are serving larger numbers of Aboriginal clients. The research uncovered significant efforts to address
this issue being initiated through the formation of various groups and partnerships.

But it is clear in the research that many challenges to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cooperation and integration remain. Many Aboriginal organizations believe that they face additional challenges, compared to non-Aboriginal agencies, in providing services that include:

- being in a disadvantaged position for the competition for funding;
- not receiving as much funding as mainstream agencies for providing similar services;
- being burdened by elaborate application and reporting requirements;
- long delays in receiving funding from government;
- having to rely on short-term funding agreements;
- not having stable long-term core funding;
- having to be more accountable to the urban Aboriginal community; and
- having to provide a “culturally-based” approach to service delivery.

All of these factors require more time, effort and funding to offer adequate programs and services to Aboriginal people. Also contributing to the lack of coordination among agencies is the competition for funds due to government mandates and funding requirements. It can be concluded that both Aboriginal and mainstream organizations are involved with Aboriginal people and it is desirable for there to be some level of coordination of services to avoid duplication, to make the best use of resources and expertise and to most effectively deliver programs and services. As the OFIFC Homelessness Study suggests, “More collaboration should be fostered both among Aboriginal providers themselves and also with mainstream service providers to fill gaps, provide complementary programs and services etc.” (2006a OFIFC).

A conclusion reached by a number of study participants was that an effective way to address this issue would be the creation of a series of Urban Aboriginal Inter-agency Councils in cities with substantial Aboriginal populations composed of representatives of a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and community leaders as a coordinating group. It was suggested that the mandate of such a
Council might include such functions as the establishment of an Urban Aboriginal Registry; the overseeing of coordination services to urban Aboriginal people, the provision of services of existing agencies and the establishment of new ones; and the overseeing of development of a continuum of care model for programs and services to Aboriginal people. It could also determine unmet needs and gaps in services and recommend appropriate action to meet those needs, including referring clients to suitable agencies. The Council would ensure that the services delivered are culturally appropriate.

A fundamental issue underlying all the discussions is whether services to urban Aboriginal peoples should be delivered by an Aboriginal agency as a parallel service or whether services could be coordinated or integrated within mainstream agencies. It is clear that there is no correct approach that is mutually exclusive given the complex nature of the urban Aboriginal population and the nature of the delivery of social services. Whatever the nature of the service provided, it is clear that an in-depth understanding of the larger Aboriginal circumstances is a prerequisite for effective programming, especially for non-Aboriginal organizations. As the OFIFC Homelessness Report points out, “[m]ainstream providers need to do more to reach out to Aboriginal service providers and learn about Aboriginal history, culture, rights, challenges etc. (2006a OFIFC). It is important to recognize the high-quality work being done by existing agencies and that these agencies require additional support to fulfill their mandates.

A related issue is culturally-based service delivery. On the one hand, an agency can divide Aboriginal clients into distinctive cultural groups or “streams” such as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and develop programs and services designed to meet their culturally specific needs. On the other hand, agencies can take a “pan-Aboriginal” approach which views Aboriginal culture as an amalgamation of all cultures into a single “melting pot”, or common Aboriginal culture. In the UATF study many Executive Directors of Aboriginal and mainstream agencies declared that their approach to service delivery was “Status-blind”. That is, they provide to all Aboriginal people (or in some cases all people) regardless of the particular group that they come from. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that there are important differences among the notions of cultural “streams”, “pan-Aboriginal” and “Status blind.”
The notion of cultural “streams” may have the positive effect of recognizing differences among three Aboriginal cultural groups but runs the risk of artificially dividing Aboriginal people based on political or legal definitions that could potentially further marginalize them. Conversely, the “pan-Aboriginal” approach “fails to recognize the differences among diverse and distinct Aboriginal cultures … thereby erasing crucial aspects of identity specific to different Aboriginal peoples” (OFIFC 2006b). The “Status blind” notion has the advantage of acknowledging differences among cultural groups while, at the same time, providing services regardless of Status or origin. But it can also be misunderstood, especially among mainstream agencies providing service to Aboriginal people, to mean the provision of services to all people including visible minorities, gays and lesbians, disabled people etc. Used in this way, the notion of “Status” runs the risk of ignoring the distinctiveness of Aboriginal people altogether.

Whatever approach is taken to service delivery it is important to show respect and honour all Aboriginal groups and their distinctive beliefs and customs and to ensure that diverse Aboriginal cultures are given a place to flourish in an urban setting. For example, “[w]hen individuals walking into a Friendship Centre are assisted in finding an elder or teacher of their own nation we are closer to the assurance that our cultures are kept alive and relevant for Aboriginal people of all origins living in urban centres” (OFIFC 2006b).

Taking a culturally-based approach to service delivery goes beyond the definition of clients and the provision of specific services. It also pertains to the structure and functioning of the organization itself. Aboriginal organizations often are characterized by a culturally-based “organizational ethos” that integrates Aboriginal beliefs, values and practices blended with Western management principles. For example, a case study of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres revealed a holistic approach to management based on traditional Aboriginal teachings such as the Medicine Wheel (Chapman and McCaskill, 1990). Aboriginal Elders are extensively involved in the organization, decisions are usually reached by consensus, meetings are opened and closed in a traditional manner, the office is smudged with sweet grass daily, staff are given time off to attend ceremonies and cultural events, staff see themselves as “helpers” responsible to the larger Aboriginal community and an emphasis is placed on
experience, individual characteristics and understanding of the culture rather than formal academic or professional qualifications when hiring.

One method of addressing the issue of how to develop an effective culturally-based organization and service delivery model is for a research project to be initiated to examine and articulate “best practices” involved in the delivery of “culturally-based” services to urban Aboriginal people. The resulting models could assist in the establishing of appropriate standards of effective service delivery to urban Aboriginal people.

Despite the demonstrated effectiveness for Aboriginal people of a culturally-based approach to service delivery, respondents stated that there is little official recognition of its validity. A strategy for obtaining recognition of this service delivery model suggested was the establishment of a series of Aboriginal Professional Associations such as a College of Aboriginal Social Services and an Association of Aboriginal Health Practitioners to develop and oversee the delivery of programs and services to urban Aboriginal people. It was suggested that urban Aboriginal agencies and mainstream agencies working with Aboriginal people could work in partnership with the appropriate provincial ministries. A number of ideas were put forward regarding the work of the Associations including undertaking a review of urban Aboriginal organizations and mainstream agencies with a view to establish a comprehensive registry of social service and health agencies and ensuring that there is adequate coordination of services, standardization of quality of service provision, advocating for equitable and stable funding of organizations, establishing acceptable standards of service delivery, appropriate cultural sensitivity in service delivery, and ensuring adequate accountability to the urban Aboriginal community.

13.4 Culture and identity: the “emerging urban Aboriginal middle class”

The UATF study data and the 2001 Census demonstrates that a substantial number of Aboriginal people have attained a satisfactory level of economic stability in the city. Indeed, there is an emerging middle class currently in all cities studied. Yet the research discovered that there is a need for these people and their children to have opportunities to practice their Aboriginal culture, support their identity, volunteer, and ex-
exercise leadership so they can become more active participants in their communities.

Our qualitative data, including key informant interviews and two focus groups on the middle class, revealed a notable characteristic of this emerging segment of the Aboriginal population: a significant number of successful urban Aboriginals appear to be moving away from the urban Aboriginal community because of a lack of organizational support for their cultural identities and aspirations. There are many Aboriginal organizations in Ontario cities but their focus is almost exclusively on social services. In addition, in some cities, especially those in North/Northwestern Ontario, the preponderance of poverty and resulting high levels of involvement with social service agencies among Aboriginal people, as well as racism by non-Aboriginal people, has led to the negative stereotype that the majority of urban Aboriginal people are poor with a number of specific negative traits. Indeed, often these stereotypes are internalized by Aboriginal people as a result of influences of colonialism, residential schools, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and racism—often leading to low self esteem and feelings of victimization. Thus the prevailing image of being an urban Aboriginal person, in some cities, is negative.

Therefore, it is apparent that many of these economically successful Aboriginal people do not identify with the larger urban Aboriginal community and do not conceive of themselves as part of a collective group. Rather, it appears that they consider themselves Aboriginal individuals working and living well in various neighbourhoods in their city (and not as contributing member of an Aboriginal community per se). Reasons such as the negative stereotypes, the lack of relevant programs and services geared to their needs as well as divisions within the urban Aboriginal community contribute to this situation. These urban Aboriginal people do not see themselves as victims and they do not use the social service organizations in the city. Importantly, this sense of middle class alienation from the larger urban Aboriginal community may, in fact, contribute to the large discrepancy reported in the Census between people who have Aboriginal ancestry and those who identify as Aboriginal people.

An obvious implication of the UATF study, therefore, is that the urban Aboriginal middle class needs opportunities to participate in the life of the urban Aboriginal community. It may be that Aboriginal and mainstream organizations will need to make efforts to attract such members.
who are not currently connected to the urban Aboriginal community. This group constitutes an untapped resource with specific skills and experience that can contribute to services and programs, and in turn expand and strengthen the urban Aboriginal community.

13.5 The need for urban Aboriginal cultural/educational centres

The Task Force research has articulated a number of challenges that face Aboriginal people living in Ontario’s cities relating to the maintenance of a vibrant Aboriginal culture in urban centres. For many research participants, a prerequisite for adequately addressing these issues is the development of a new set of institutions and associations that will provide a more complete infrastructure for urban Aboriginal people that affords them an opportunity to practice their culture and facilitate the maintenance of a vibrant community. It is often through organizational participation and the communication among members of a group involved in that participation that individuals find support and fulfillment and become contributing members of a community. It is also through such organizations that community solidarity is built. Some institutions are manifested through physical structures such as cultural centres. Others are expressed in less physical ways, for instance, professional associations. What they all have in common are people with like interests coming together for a shared purpose. Cultures are reinforced by this kind of institutional expression and the urban Aboriginal community could benefit from the development of such. At present such institutions are absent in most Ontario cities. By contrast, most ethnic groups in Canada living in urban areas are characterized by a wide array of related institutions, both formal and informal, that play critical roles in maintaining an individual’s cultural identity.

Respondents remarked that the formation and maintenance of such organizations will require cooperation among a number of stakeholders including: Aboriginal leaders; federal, provincial and municipal governments; and the private sector. Once established, it will be important for members of the urban Aboriginal community to contribute, in terms of time, expertise and money to sustaining such an organiza-
Volunteerism is well established among urban Aboriginal people, especially women, in assisting people in need. However, the urban Aboriginal middle class, the ones with the economic means to contribute financially, are not currently involved to any great extent with the urban Aboriginal community. It is important to develop ways to integrate the urban Aboriginal middle class into the community for a cultural organization to sustain itself and flourish over the long run.

Looking at their life experiences in the city, many economically successful respondents reported that they were able to turn their lives around through key influences in their life, in particular, assistance from Aboriginal and mainstream agencies and supports from friends, relatives, teachers, mentors and Elders. Many of these individuals were interested in maintaining (or reconnecting) with their Aboriginal culture.

For many, a major issue in this regard is the lack of a dedicated Aboriginal cultural facility in the city. As stated previously, the vast majority of urban Aboriginal organizations are service-oriented. In this sense the urban Aboriginal community lacks a diversity of institutions that are designed to support cultural identity and build community solidarity.

It should be emphasized that research participants reported that numerous social and culture events do occur in cities and programs are in place in Ontario (pow wows, sweats, feasts, language instruction, Elder teachings, etc.) both within Aboriginal organizations and within the larger community. But respondents emphasized that there is a need for some sort of urban community cultural centre. They suggested that such a centre could contribute to the maintenance of the Ontario Aboriginal community in many ways: it would be a gathering place for people to informally socialize; it would be a facility to hold social and cultural events and ceremonies; it would be a showpiece for Aboriginal arts and crafts; it would be a place where Aboriginal groups could meet; it would host an educational resource teaching Aboriginal history, stories and language; it would be a community interactive museum; it would be a day care centre; it would be an interpretative centre where non-Aboriginal peoples could learn about Aboriginal culture and a recreational facility for athletic programs and sports leagues and so forth.

In addition to being a resource to reinforce culture for Aboriginal people, the centre would facilitate cultural exchanges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people through various outreach activities. For ex-
ample, school field trips could visit the centre and youth and adult exchanges and educational events could be held there. The centre could become an important resource for non-Aboriginal people in terms of learning about Aboriginal culture and interacting with Aboriginal people in a positive environment.

Some of the major questions respondents raised about the establishment of such a centre included: who would take responsibility for organizing and operating it? How would it be funded? What would its mandate be? Where would it be located? What would it look like? How could it be sustained? Respondents made it clear that any effort to organize such a structure would be complex and require a great deal of cooperation. They suggested that politics and internal differences would need to be put aside and alliances with government and the non-Aboriginal sector of cities would be necessary. It would be clear that such a facility should be governed and operated by Aboriginal people and would require a substantial commitment of time and money from the Aboriginal community itself. At the same time, participants pointed out that there already exists a cadre of highly skilled Aboriginal people that have the planning, organizational and fund-raising capabilities to undertake such a task. There is also a strong ethic of volunteering in the urban Aboriginal community. Moreover, there are an increasingly significant number of Aboriginal peoples in urban centres with financial resources to contribute to such a project.

A clear conclusion from the findings is that Aboriginal leaders in urban areas might explore the feasibility of establishing Aboriginal cultural education centres in cities across Ontario. A needs assessment could be undertaken to determine the specific nature of such a facility. Initial funding for the facility could be provided by the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government (i.e. municipalities could donate suitable land for the centres; the provincial government could provide capital funds as well as setting up a building fund to accept donations from the Aboriginal community). Members of the Aboriginal community would be the prime sponsors of the centre and contribute their time, expertise and financial resources to sustaining the centre.

Elders, of course, would be at the heart of an urban Aboriginal cultural center, offering teachings, conducting ceremonies and sharing their knowledge. Moreover, as today’s Elders are increasingly lost to the
Aboriginal community through as they age and die, such a center would provide a critical space within the urban center from which new Elders could be guided and mentored. In recognition of the important function that Elders play in the urban Aboriginal community specific programs could be developed and funded by government that would support their work and the passing on of their knowledge. In addition, other practitioners of traditional Aboriginal culture such as the full moon ceremony, drumming, healing etc. could be part of the cultural activities integrated into a culture education centre.

Given the urgent need for measure to support Aboriginal culture in cities, research participants suggested that it would be appropriate for the government of Ontario establish an Urban Aboriginal Enhancement Fund to promote the maintenance of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture in urban centres, particularly the work of Aboriginal Elders and traditional people and the maintenance of Aboriginal languages. They proposed that the Fund could provide financial resources for such activities as: Elder’s and traditional peoples gatherings, Aboriginal language programs, cultural youth camps, cultural exchanges, guest speaker series, arts and crafts displays, workshops etc.

Further, respondents stated that Aboriginal cultures are inseparable from Aboriginal languages. It is critical, therefore, to recognize that the number of speakers and the overall rates of fluency in Ontario are low in the urban centers and every effort must be made to support efforts of language study, fluency development and the building of new Aboriginal language lexicons. Recognizing the importance of Aboriginal languages to the enrichment of Aboriginal cultures in the cities, some participants suggested that the federal and provincial governments support Aboriginal language instruction in the public schools as well as in private institutions.

Finally, a key aspect of traditional Aboriginal culture is a special relationship to the land. Spiritual ceremonies such as sweat lodges are integral to Aboriginal culture and require physical spaces to be practiced. Therefore, in recognition that traditional Aboriginal culture and ceremonies are closely tied to the land, some participants suggested that it would be appropriate for municipalities donate parcels of land as “sacred spaces” to appropriate Aboriginal organizations on to which to conduct Aboriginal ceremonies and cultural events.
13.6 Aboriginal youth: education, crime and employment

The research discovered that one of the most vulnerable groups in cities is Aboriginal youth. This group is particularly important because of the high percentage of youth among the urban Aboriginal population in all Ontario cities. As mentioned previously, the federal and provincial governments are active in funding a number of youth programs and services such as the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Akwe:go Urban Aboriginal Children’s Program, the Stay in School Program and the recently announced Aboriginal Education Strategy and abolition of the zero-tolerance policy. At the same time, there was concern expressed that there needs to be more organized programs in place for children and youth. In addition, there is often no youth group in urban areas with which to effectively represent the views of youth.

Given the importance of the issue of Aboriginal youth alienation it can be concluded that a way to address the issues would be for province of Ontario to establish an Urban Aboriginal Youth Strategy in partnership with Aboriginal and mainstream agencies with a view to establish additional youth programs such as, peer mentoring/tutoring programs, big brother/big sister programs, cultural events and programs, athletic and sports programs etc. for Aboriginal youth in addition to the youth programs that already exist.

In the past governments sponsored a series of youth leadership training programs to facilitate the development of a generation of urban Aboriginal leaders. Study participants emphasized the need to develop such leadership initiatives. It would be appropriate for the Urban Aboriginal Youth Strategy to fund a series of youth leadership programs be established to develop the next generation of Aboriginal leaders in Ontario.

In addition, frequent mention of the pressing need to provide positive alternative programs and activities for youth to deflect them from engaging in unhealthy activities such as gangs and crime were emphasized. Sports and recreation were mentioned as positive ways to channel youth energy and interests. Thus, as part of the Urban Aboriginal Youth Strategy Aboriginal organizations such as Friendship Centres, where appropriate, could be funded to organize Aboriginal youth sports and recreational leagues and fitness centres in urban centres.

Fundamental to the issues facing youth is hunger. Food insecurity hits children and youth particularly hard as they are often the most vul-
nerable. *Child Hunger and Food Insecurity among Urban Aboriginal Families* (2003 OFIFC) documented serious problems in this regard and made several recommendations to rectify the situation.

The importance of having positive role models and a stable Aboriginal identity was emphasized by many participants in the research. One of the most vulnerable groups is young children who are entering the public education system. It is critical for children to have an initial positive experience with formal education if they are to succeed in the long-term. Parents themselves may view the educational system negatively and may not be in a position to assist their children with school or create a positive learning environment at home due to poverty, violence or other factors. This issue has been recognized by the Aboriginal Head Start Program which focuses on both the academic and cultural aspects of education. However, after children leave Head Start they frequently experience difficulty in the public system. There is no transition from one program to the other. One method of addressing this would be for the federal Aboriginal Head Start Program to be expanded through “satellite programs” within school systems for Aboriginal children as a transition from the Head Start Program to the public education system. The program should continue the model of the Head Start program in emphasizing both academic and cultural components.

Another group is late childhood to early adolescence (7 to 17). Respondents indicated that this age is when youth are so vulnerable in terms of forming their identities and they are so open to negative influences such as drugs, alcohol, gangs and criminal activity. It is critical to have services and programs available for this age group. The situation is particularly important when youth do not have a stable home environment, as is often the case. It is also a time when youth begin to see going to school negatively and often begin to experience serious academic difficulties. The impact of negative stereotypes on self esteem and identity is often very severe during this stage of adolescence and can lead to disengagement and disinterest, major reasons male Aboriginal youth gave for dropping out of school. This is a phase when positive Aboriginal role models and relationships are important for a youth’s identity and self-esteem. Mentoring and big brother/sister programs can greatly assist at this age. The newly announced *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* by the Ontario Ministry of Education is clearly a step in the right direction.
in addressing these issues but, as the UATF research clearly indicates, it doesn’t go far enough to meet the educational needs of urban Aboriginal youth.

Racism in school was cited by respondents as a major problem both in terms of the lack of curriculum in courses where Aboriginal students can “meet themselves” in a positive manner and in interaction with non-Aboriginal students. Aboriginal history and contemporary issues are increasingly being taught in a more appropriate way in schools but a great deal remains to be done, especially in schools where there is a high Aboriginal student enrolment. Native Studies is now a recognized teachable subject but courses are rarely offered. The Task Force concluded that it would desirable for a review of the current curriculum used school to be undertaken with a view to increasing the amount of Aboriginal content e.g. add new courses (including Aboriginal language, history, contemporary issues and cultural courses).

Given the fact that many Aboriginal youth feel alienated from the mainstream educational system research participants suggested that alternative schools be established that will teach a “blended” curriculum composed of academic subjects and Aboriginal curriculum. Aboriginal leaders in urban centres might enter into discussions with urban School Boards and the Ministry of Education with a view to establish a series of Aboriginal Cultural School in Ontario cities with significant Aboriginal student populations as alternatives to public schools. As part of the process to establish such schools a study of best practices of various cultural survival schools in Canada needs be undertaken. The schools could be geared to the needs of all Aboriginal students, particularly students of middle class urban Aboriginal people.

The other aspect of racism, real or perceived, uncovered in the research is the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Racism and bullying were reported as significant problem for Aboriginal students. Often students are treated differently because of their skin colour or behaviour. These resulting feelings of inferiority and shyness sometimes lead to not “fitting in” or not participating fully in school activities, and may be difficult to overcome, particularly when combined with serious issues with transportation, such as not being able to afford bus fare, if there is a bus at all, as well as perhaps assuming family responsibilities such as looking after younger siblings. These negative factors often result in youth not seeing the relevance of staying in school.
and so they drop out. It is clear that a significant number of Aboriginal students do not feel comfortable in existing schools: the educational system is not meeting their needs.

Another barrier to youth success was the high drop out rate of Aboriginal students in the public school system. One aspect of this issue relates to the discrepancy in findings between similar school attendance rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and yet significantly lower graduation rates of Aboriginal students (as discussed earlier in the report). It may be the case that the practice and timing of student per-capita funding by the Department of Indian Affairs to school boards coupled with the “zero tolerance” policy are factors in the issue. The recently announced termination of the zero tolerance policy by the Ontario Ministry of Education with a new emphasis on assisting troubled youth to remain in school is a positive step to addressing the high rate of Aboriginal youth dropping out of school.

The third age group that came to the forefront throughout the research was the late adolescence-early adult period (18 to 25). This is an age when youth can express their ideas and opinions and they need a forum to represent them. Often youth have distinctive vehicles for telling their stories and expressing their identities such as musical styles, language and clothing. This is an age when youth can begin to take their places as contributing members of the Aboriginal community through taking on such roles as becoming “helpers”. Yet it is often a time when they are marginalized in terms of not having their voices heard within the larger Aboriginal community and they often experience difficulties in establishing successful careers. For these issues to be addressed there needs to be a forum where youth can meet and independently communicate their ideas and reinforce their Aboriginal identities. As stated in *Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change*, “it is critical that youth have a voice and sense of involvement in matters affecting them” (Ottawa, 2003, p 33).

Numerous examples of Aboriginal youth taking control of their own representation currently exists in Canada. They include: the Native Youth Movement which has chapters in cities across Canada; Aboriginal youth magazines such as SPIRIT and Redwire; drum groups; and musicians such as Lucie Idlout, Skeena Rice, Brock Stonefish and the Reddnation hip hop group.

Youth expressed the desire to become more organized; to have a voice; and to have a place to meet and “hang out.” A physical centre is which
provides a setting for gathering, programming and recreation is critical for youth to engage in positive and healthy lifestyles. The establishment of such a centre has been recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change Final Report.

Youth organizations can serve to enhance many concerns including; the transference of skills and experience, allowing them to more formally present their views; to promote networks and to build solidarity; increase their self-esteem; strengthen their cultural identity; encourage healthy attitudes and behaviour; and integrate them into the urban Aboriginal community. Such an initiative can be supported by the federal government’s Urban Multipurpose Youth Centres Initiative, especially if the program is modified to allow for long-term stable funding.

It can be concluded that there is a need for Urban Aboriginal Youth Councils (or chapters of the Native Youth Movement) in urban centres in Ontario in order for Aboriginal youth to represent themselves and organize events and programs to meet their needs. The organizations, once established, should be operated by Aboriginal youth themselves. The organizations should provide satisfactory places to meet and hold events and be given adequate funding to operate.

The lack of higher levels of education leads to an even greater problem for Aboriginal youth—the lack of meaningful employment. Aboriginal youth reported that they face a number of barriers in obtaining jobs:

• insufficient education and skills;
• racism and negative stereotypes
• transportation;
• time management; and
• the need for examples of successful Aboriginal businesses and positive role models.

Youth in the study pointed out that there are few examples of Aboriginals working in high profile jobs in the service industry or in management positions in the private sector. There is a further need to have a meaningful employment initiative to assist Aboriginal youth with employment. One example of such a program in another part of Canada is the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce’s Aboriginal Employment Initiative. The best practices of similar programs need to be studied, modified and implemented to fit the specific situation in particular cities.
Any initiative that would increase the employment rates of urban Aboriginal youth would need to involve both the private sector and organized labour. One way to address this issue is for urban Aboriginal leaders to contact various business leaders and organizations in the private sector start discussing how to create training programs that target Aboriginal youth for jobs. A joint body composed of Aboriginal business people and other Aboriginals could be created to oversee the resulting initiatives. Funding for the initiative could be provided by appropriate government ministries in cooperation with the private sector. Further, it would be beneficial if organized labour established effective apprenticeship programs for Aboriginal youth to facilitate their entry into skilled trades jobs.

All of these issues affecting urban Aboriginal youth are long-standing, well-known and well-documented. Numerous examples of effective programs for youth exist in other parts of Canada. It can be concluded that the lack of attention to these issues has contributed to the increased gang and criminal activity engaged in currently in youth in cities such as Thunder Bay. There was a perception among the majority of respondents that youth crime is on the rise. For the issues of education, representation and employment to be seriously addressed, communication must be initiated in a climate of mutual respect between the adult Aboriginal community and its youth as well as among them and School Boards, the private sector and organized labour.

13.7 Racism and urban Aboriginal people

The research revealed that racism, in its various forms, is a significant, long-term and continuing problem in all cities in the study. We use the term racism broadly to refer to a wide range of issues relating to urban Aboriginal people including: prejudice and discrimination, stereotyping, racial profiling, exclusionary practice, internal racism/oppression, lateral violence and divisiveness within the urban Aboriginal community.

The problem is most acute in public places such as stores, restaurants, busses, in relations with the police, and in schools and is felt most intensely by the poorer members of the Aboriginal community. A major study of racism, A Community of Acceptance: Respect for Thunder Bay’s Diversity (2002), documented the nature and extent of racism in that city and its negative effects on the city’s cohesion and community development.
Similarly, studies of racism were conducted in Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins and North Bay. Particularly problematic was the lack of understanding of Aboriginal peoples’ treaty rights and use of Status cards in stores and restaurants. Perhaps the most disturbing finding is that racism is perceived as a normal part of life for Aboriginal people.

Various forms of racism and discrimination, including systemic racism, are prevalent when there is a serious imbalance in power relations in the city. In these cases Aboriginal people are often characterized by a number of negative stereotypes. Racism is perhaps best addressed through a combination of working to end power imbalances as well as anti-racism/discrimination education.

When there is a sufficient level of social, economic and political integration (not assimilation) and interaction between members of the minority and majority societies, there is the opportunity for communication and dialogue on a personal and face-to-face basis on common tasks that provides the potential for changes in attitudes. Nonetheless, where cultural differences persist as an intentional part of this integration, anti-racism/discrimination education further functions to help people understand the more implicit and structural elements of racist thinking and the tendency to turn back to and rely on negative stereotyping in times of stress or conflict.

On their own, efforts at anti-racism/oppression education and cross cultural awareness training within the workplace, a strategy which has been attempted for many years, have had mixed results. Participants may participate in the experience but distance themselves from the message being presented because they believe that the negative stereotypes are true (often based on their personal experience or media representation). As long as there exists a situation of “two solitudes” characterized by a “we/they” attitude little change will occur.

Another factor contributing to racism mentioned by respondents related to the image of Aboriginal presented in the media. While some attempts to change the approaches to media representation have been made some study participants believed that it was still an issue. Often Aboriginal people hold few employment positions (with some notable exceptions), especially editorial positions, within the urban media infrastructure. How a group’s stories are told and who tells them to the general public have significant implications for the general image (as well as peoples’ attitudes) toward that group. Aboriginal people need to tell their own stories. It is clear that Aboriginal people need to be more
involved in influential and high profile roles in the media to ensure that the picture is accurate and that they are seen as visible. There was also a perception that police utilized racial profiling in their dealings with urban Aboriginal people.

In order to address the issue an institutional commitment needs to be made by mainstream society. For example, because so much racism is experienced in local situations respondents felt that it would be appropriate for municipal governments to establish the office of Aboriginal Ombudsman with sufficient independence, authority and staff to investigate complaints of racism and discrimination so as to bring about any necessary changes to racist practices. Another measure put forward was for groups such as the Police Services Boards and other urban oversight bodies to have Aboriginal representation in order to ensure that policies and procedures relating to Aboriginal people are effectively implemented. In addition, workshops between urban Aboriginal leaders and representatives of various media organizations were suggested as a means of discussing ways to involve Aboriginal people more in the media presentation of stories related to Aboriginal people (e.g., student co-op placements, apprenticeship programs, guest columnists and commentators etc.). Furthermore, it would a step forward for urban Aboriginal leaders in partnership with municipal officials to establish Anti-Racism Committees in cities in Ontario with substantial Aboriginal populations to initiate a series of anti-racism initiatives such as: public awareness campaigns, cross-cultural awareness workshops, affirmative action programs etc. with a view to address the issues of racism against urban Aboriginal people.

Another important, and sensitive, factor was uncovered by the research that may be contributing to this situation. That is, there is clearly a problem with internal divisiveness and discrimination among Aboriginal peoples themselves in all of the cities studied. A substantial number of respondents (over 50%) had experienced racism from another Aboriginal person. This finding was echoed in the focus groups and plenary sessions when participants reported that there are significant political divisions and resistance within the Aboriginal community to change or new initiatives.

Respondents suggested that internal divisions were an important reason for the lack of progress regarding the development of strong, unified Aboriginal communities in urban areas. It is also a detriment to establishing a positive identity and willingness to get involved among young
people. It would also be a negative incentive to becoming a leader in the community, especially among members of the middle class. Leadership entails becoming vulnerable and requires support from the community, a norm that does not seem to be overly present in some cities. In the long run internal divisiveness serves to keep the group fragmented and will impede change.

Respondents suggested that the topic, in the past, has been so sensitive that it has not been openly discussed, but that the time is right to open it up for dialogue in a respectful and sensitive way. Some suggested that urban Aboriginal leaders could convene a series of workshops to address the issue of divisiveness among various members of the Aboriginal community. Such workshops should be facilitated by members of the community not associated with an existing organization and with a reputation of neutrality and fairness and should involve Aboriginal Elders. The norms of openness, respect and lack of politics or vested interest should be established for the workshops.

### 13.8 Urban Aboriginal women

Research respondents noted that Aboriginal women occupy two very notable positions within the urban community; they are both the most violently oppressed and the most socially active in working to end that oppression. Our research has shown that within both of these social groups there are both gaps in services and agencies that require much needed enhancement and support.

In addressing these unmet needs, an Aboriginal women-specific continuum of care strategy might be developed. Importantly, this strategy will need to be responsive to a diversity of needs including those immediate transitional needs of new arrivals to cities, the short-term adjustment needs of those seeking to better integrate into the community, and longer-term professional and cultural needs of the more established residents. The magnitude of the problem suggests that women Aboriginal leaders in cities come together to organize a comprehensive urban Aboriginal Women’s Strategy for urban Aboriginal women with the intent of coordinating existing social services and developing new programs and services that provide a continuum of care for all Aboriginal women in urban areas.
At-risk Aboriginal women in urban areas (often those recently arrived) require a co-ordinated, and geographically consolidated array of services that are geared towards providing safe, and culturally supportive spaces that respond to both the immediate and longer term needs away from poverty and violence. These most vulnerable members of the community require an array of counselling and services including those that meet their most basic needs of food, safe shelter, clothing, and transportation.

Participants declared that it is clear that there needs to be an expansion of support services to urban Aboriginal women, with specific priority given to the following:

- healthy food, safe shelter, clothing, and transportation;
- addictions, mental health, relationships, life skills, and legal counselling;
- transitional housing;
- education and training; and
- childcare as an integral part to the provision of all of these services.

Specifically, for those Aboriginal women and girls working in the sex trade in Ontario cities what is required is a coordination of basic services aimed at immediate harm reduction. Shelters or safe houses for these women should provide all of these basic needs. There is also a requirement for increased support for the work of existing agencies working with Aboriginal sex workers and that government representatives and community leaders working in this (or closely related) sectors work collectively towards the creation of safe houses that will provide an array of basic needs services and be openly available during the day and night.

In transitioning out of abusive relationships, extreme poverty and violence, Aboriginal women require an array of counselling services including, addictions, mental health, relationship, life skills, and legal. It is important that these services are offered in a culturally sensitive manner and that Aboriginal women be given direct and priority access to these services. The provision of transitional housing is a key factor as women move from shelters to more private and stable home environments. Education and training will be an important aspect of the movement to healing as will mentoring and the building of new social networks and community.
For those professional Aboriginal women that have succeeded in college and university and who are working in the community, cultural activities and mentoring with Elders and traditional people has been identified as having a significant benefit to personal and community health and development. There was a need expressed in the research for a professional Aboriginal women’s association to be established to be a forum for expressing the views of women in the cities that will assist women at all levels of the community in their financial, educational, professional and cultural lives.

In many ways Aboriginal women are the keepers of the culture. There should be an increased level of support for Aboriginal women’s cultural activities including working with Elders, ceremonial practice and language development.

Importantly, culturally appropriate childcare is a concern for all Aboriginal women which should be openly available at all levels in the community. Basic needs and transitional services should provide childcare as an integral part of the delivery of those services. As well, childcare must be available to those Aboriginal women at work and in school so as to support these efforts.

Further, in recognition that many Aboriginal women work and volunteer in urban Aboriginal agencies, a women’s mentoring program might be established in Aboriginal service agencies with a goal of assisting women who are beginning their careers in urban Aboriginal agencies.

Finally, in an effort to rectify the inaccurate and negative images of Aboriginal people in the media Aboriginal leaders could develop a community-wide (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agency) public awareness campaign aimed at ending the violence against Aboriginal women in urban areas through education, consciousness raising, media reporting and efforts to decrease the under reporting of violent incidences by Aboriginal women.

13.9 Urban Aboriginal people and health

The research has demonstrated that there are a number of serious health issues facing Aboriginal peoples in Ontario’s cities. Only half of the survey respondents have a family doctor. A large number of respondents
therefore are forced to utilize walk-in clinics or emergency rooms in hospitals for their health care. Over half of the study participants use some form of traditional wellness in their daily lives and often prefer to go to an Aboriginal health service centres such as Anishnawbe Mushkiki in Thunder Bay and Wabano in Ottawa. In addition, urban Aboriginal peoples face numerous physical and mental health issues, often associated with characteristics uncovered in this study including, poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, sexual abuse and suicide.

This is supported by data from the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey which discovered that the majority (57%) of Aboriginal adults living off reserve have been diagnosed with at least one chronic condition (Stats Canada, 2001). The Circle of Certainty Report undertaken by the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy (2004, pp. 72–73) found that teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS were also serious problems among youth. Many of the health issues were related to a lack of an awareness and understanding of the teachings of traditional Aboriginal culture; as cultural supports and cultural continuity are associated with good physical and mental health.

The cost and distances associated with use of transportation was also cited in the report as a major problem for families accessing health and social services. A related problem pertains to the lack of available health and social services in the evenings and on weekends. Some respondents suggested that there was a particular lack of services available for Aboriginal men experiencing physical or mental difficulties. In addition, some individuals suggested that there was often a problem with communication between Aboriginal patients and health care providers in mainstream health facilities due to the latter’s unfamiliarity with the norms and behaviour in Aboriginal culture. Contributing to the problem was the lack of qualified interpreters in Aboriginal languages available during the interaction between patient and care giver.

While physical health ailments are more obviously more detectable, mental health issues are often more subtle and difficult to diagnose and represented a serious gap in health services for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario. Problem of high rates of suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse etc. are often the symptoms of underlying mental health illnesses. There was a clear recognition by participants that there are not enough trained personnel or facilities to treat various forms of mental
illness and that often individuals go untreated until a major negative event occurs. Some research participants suggested that a large number of Aboriginal women who are incarcerated in prisons are there less for criminal activity as for mental health problems.

In addition, the research discovered that a large number of urban Aboriginal people utilize traditional Aboriginal practices and healers for some of their health needs. It will be important for governments to officially recognize and support these practitioners as part of an alternative medical system, including the setting of appropriate standards, in order for them to continue to provide their skills and for the practices to continue in the future.

It is clear that despite the Ontario government’s New Directions: Aboriginal Health Policy for Ontario designed to address these issues in a comprehensive way, a great deal remains to be done. As is the case with so many of the issues discussed in this report the health issues of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario are well documented and recognized. There is an immediate need to articulate gaps in health services, support existing health agencies and develop strategies to address them.

And lastly, given the expressed importance of Elders as the holder of traditional, health knowledge and with the recognition that they are increasingly lost to the Aboriginal community through aging, it is critical that their work and their process of mentoring and guiding the future generations of Elders be supported.

An obvious conclusion for the UATF study is that action needs to be taken to address the pressing issues of the state of urban Aboriginal people’s physical and mental health. A people cannot effectively participate in urban life if they face major problems with their health and experience barriers in accessing health care facilities. An appropriate action may be to establish Urban Aboriginal Health Boards composed of representatives from Aboriginal health organizations, mainstream health agencies and government in cities with substantial Aboriginal populations to monitor the effectiveness of health care to Aboriginal people and develop new initiatives where they are required. The Health Boards could have official recognition, stable funding and a small staff and coordinate their activities closely with government ministries. The Health Boards could engage in such activities as; advocating on behalf Aboriginal patients, sponsoring cross-cultural workshops to sensitize mainstream health care workers to
Aboriginal culture, ensure that language translation services are available to patients and facilitate the integration of traditional Aboriginal healing practices with Western medical practices. Only when such effective employment and economic development initiatives are taken can urban Aboriginal become contributing citizens of Ontario cities.

13.10 Income levels, poverty, employment and economic development

One of the most important finding from the Task Force is that poverty, with its related issues of high unemployment, low incomes and high rates of school leaving persists among urban Aboriginal people. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a wide variety of economic development initiatives to be implemented. It is difficult for youth, often without adequate levels of education to find stable employment. Similarly, single parent Aboriginal women or women newly arrived in the city have little opportunity to develop a stable economic existence in the city. Racism and negative stereotypes compound the problem. And while a number of Aboriginal employment programs are in place additional mechanisms are needed to give Aboriginal youth and women a chance to start a career.

In the past, with some notable exceptions, the private sector and labour unions have not been involved to any extent in employment initiatives. These are the sectors in the economy with the greatest access to jobs. Thus, without their involvement little meaningful results can be attained. Like so many of the issues articulated in this study there needs to be dedicated institutional support for any initiative for it to be effective. The urban Aboriginal community in partnership with other key stakeholders should organize themselves to systematically address such economic problems as skills development employment training, initiating Aboriginal small businesses, apprenticeship programs, peer support, investment clubs and organizational mentoring programs.

An appropriate action to address the issue of the lack of economic development is for Aboriginal leaders in Ontario cities to work in cooperation with mainstream private sector individuals and governments to set up Urban Aboriginal Economic Councils to initiate employment and eco-
nomic initiatives in urban areas. Part of its mandate could be to oversee the development of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses and other economic development initiative. Successful Aboriginal business persons could be approached to participate on the Council. The Council should foster such activities as: information sharing, networking, assistance with business plans, peer support, apprenticeships programs, investment clubs, joint-venture initiatives, entrepreneur role models and training programs.

At the same time, there is a need at the other end of the economic spectrum. The emerging urban middle class made up of professionals and entrepreneurs are often looking for economic opportunities to advance themselves. This growing cadre of Aboriginal individuals is establishing partnerships with non-Aboriginal people, working in a diversity of areas (including Aboriginal agencies and related government departments) and accessing capital assistance services such as those offered by Aboriginal Business Canada to start businesses. It is imperative that financial and other supports be available to this group as they will be the leaders and employers in the urban Aboriginal community in the future.

For this group of individuals the Urban Aboriginal Economic Councils could establish a series of investment clubs composed of like-minded Aboriginal people to pool their resources and invest in such ventures as: equity bonds, stocks, lending circles etc. with the advice of financial experts and other resources. The Economic Councils could also work with Aboriginal Business Canada and other financial institutions to develop an Aboriginal Business Capital Fund and develop a process whereby capital can be made more readily available to Aboriginal people who wish to start businesses. Links to other resources such as CESO, banks, the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce, Professional Associations etc. should also be established to assist in developing viable business plans, market strategies, partnerships and other financial resources that can facilitate the availability of loans and business expertise to Aboriginal entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Councils could play a role in addressing the issue of Aboriginal employees, especially entry-level positions, within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies, businesses and organizations experiencing difficulties in adjusting to the norms and expectations of private sector organizations as well as the related problem of being promoted to middle management. For example, a study of Aboriginal employees of Casino
Rama discovered the Aboriginal people often experienced “culture shock” (i.e. a clash of cultural values and norms) and “the glass ceiling” (i.e. barriers to promotion based on lack of effective communication between Aboriginal employees and non-Aboriginal managers) which resulted in a high turnover of Aboriginal employees and a limited number of Aboriginal middle or senior managers (2003 McCaskill and Fitzmaurice). An effective way to address this issue would be for the Economic Council to develop an Aboriginal Peoples Retention and Advancement Strategy to implement measures to ensure Aboriginal employees are retained and promoted within organizations.

The study data also reported significant findings on the awareness and value of Aboriginal based businesses. While the awareness of Aboriginal businesses seems only moderate, a large percentage of respondents indicated that they would use an Aboriginal they were available. The Economic Councils could undertake to develop an inventory of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses in their city and produce an Aboriginal Business Registry that can be used as a resource for people interested in utilizing Aboriginal businesses as well as for future economic development.

13.11 Aboriginal housing

The quality of our home living environment and the security and stability that it provides relates directly to our ability to move outwards and live healthy and meaningful lives within the greater community. For Aboriginal people in Ontario’s cities the stress associated with an unstable household impacts on the majority of income levels, age categories and family situations. For some, socio-economic situations lead to housing being one of the most immediate and pressing needs they have. For those in more stable financial situations, the security of ownership remains, nonetheless, elusive. The reality of an emerging group of economically successful urban Aboriginal people might suggest that housing is not a high priority. However, the data reveals that this is not the case, and that stable and affordable housing, especially for those in the lower socioeconomic groups is a persistent and unmet need. In addition, Aboriginal people make up a disproportionate number of homeless people in Ontario cities for whom the housing situation is acute.
Several Aboriginal housing programs funded by the federal and provincial governments currently exist but they cannot keep up with the need. Importantly, the majority of Aboriginal people in the Task Force study did not feel that their housing needs were being met. As well, issues of racism and other forms of discrimination were cited as a significant barrier to accessing affordable housing. In addition, there was a significant number of responses that spoke to the need for a *continuum of care* in housing as the homeless are assisted into emergency shelters, transitional homes, and then to more stable housing which incorporates a diversity of social services.

The research concluded that there were a number of measures that could be taken to help alleviate the housing problems facing urban Aboriginal people. It is clear that the appropriate federal and provincial ministries need to provide increased financial support for the existing Aboriginal housing services infrastructure in Ontario cities with a view to reducing waiting lists, providing a diversity of housing options, providing a continuum of care and services as people move through homelessness, to shelters, to transitional homes, and then to stable housing. In addition, a program could be established to increase the number of Aboriginal housing units available to meet the specific needs of single mothers and their children. Further, a program could be established to increase the number of Aboriginal housing units designed specifically to meet the diverse needs of single people, including youth, men, and Elders. For those struggling to acquire sufficient financial resources to buy a house a first-time home owner program with low interest loans could be established to facilitate urban Aboriginal people to move from rental accommodations to home ownership. These measures would go a long way to addressing the housing issues facing urban Aboriginal people.

### 13.12 Themes from the findings

A number of themes arose from the findings of the UATF research. It is apparent that the story presented in this report and the question of what needs to be done fall out along four overarching themes that coalesce into an analytic framework with which to understand urban Aboriginal people. The recommendations contained in the following chapter are organized around these themes.
1. **Strategic relationships**
It is clear from the study that new strategic relationships among the various stakeholders involved with urban Aboriginal people are required. This includes Aboriginal organizations, mainstream agencies, federal and provincial governments, First Nations and the private sector. Efforts have already been made in this direction. The federal government and province of Ontario have had discussions among departments and ministries and in some cities there are good working relationships between Aboriginal and mainstream agencies.

Still, a great deal remains to be done. The jurisdictional issues among difference levels of governments need to be addressed. The lack of coordination of services between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies has been articulated as an important issue in some cities. In some cases, relationships between urban Aboriginal organizations and First Nations need to be fostered. Functioning partnerships among stakeholders based upon mutual respect can lead to new policy initiatives and coordination of services and programs that recognize that a majority of Aboriginal people in Ontario now reside in urban areas and require new approaches to effectively meet their needs.

2. **Access to opportunities**
There can be no stability for urban Aboriginal people until the basic necessities in life are secured. Without adequate housing, a sufficient level of education and training and employment an individual cannot hope to successfully adjust to urban life.

The research has discovered that, while there are an increasing number of Aboriginal people who have become upwardly mobile and attained a stable economic existence in urban areas, there are also a significant number of Aboriginal people who are struggling to attain these basic essentials. Aboriginal and mainstream organizations are providing important services to address these needs with the support of governments. But the findings of the UATF study indicate that significant challenges regarding education and training, employment and housing remain for urban Aboriginal people. Gaps in programs and barriers to accessing services continue to exist.

New initiatives are required to assist urban Aboriginal people to overcome these barriers and take their rightful place as contributing citizens of Ontario’s cities.
3. Unique populations

The research has demonstrated that for particular populations of urban Aboriginal people, namely youth and women, special strategies need to be developed to assist them in becoming contributing citizens of Ontario’s urban areas. The urban Aboriginal community in Ontario is young and searching for meaningful roles in terms of attaining education and employment as well as establishing a stable Aboriginal identity. There is a danger that this group will turn to criminal activity such as drug abuse and gangs if they do not find their rightful place in Ontario’s cities. At the same time, an increasing number of urban Aboriginal youth are obtaining higher levels of education and training and are motivated to contribute to the urban Aboriginal community. Their voices need to be heard.

Aboriginal women face serious challenges of domestic violence, child care, poverty, transportation and lack of meaningful employment. Women are also extensively engaged in volunteer work in the community and are often the ones contributing to the maintenance of traditional Aboriginal culture in urban areas. There also exists a sizeable number of professional Aboriginal women in cities. Aboriginal organizations and governments need to work together to more effectively meet the needs of these groups.

4. Individual and community health and well-being

The findings indicate that a significant number of individuals experience serious difficulties in accessing adequate health care. The research also discovered that traditional Aboriginal healing practices remain an important part of health care for urban Aboriginal people. It will be important that both streams of healing be recognized and supported to ensure the well-being of urban Aboriginal people, both for the individual and the larger urban Aboriginal community.

For urban Aboriginal people to take their place within Ontario’s cities there will also have to be a healthy and vibrant Aboriginal community. Individuals need to feel a sense of their inherent worth to develop a healthy self-image and believe that they are part of a vital community with a strong culture. Part of that process involves having a perception that members of society accept them as a worthwhile person and that their culture is honoured by members of other groups. Thus, an important aspect for the emergence of a strong community is the rela-
tions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, the findings discovered that racism, in many forms, continues to be a major problem for urban Aboriginal people. There was also a sense that the urban Aboriginal community was fragmented due to internal divisiveness. It is critical that measures be taken to address these issues for the development of a healthy urban Aboriginal community.

It is also important to recognize that, while serious social problems continue to exist, there are also a growing number of well-educated, healthy and economically stable individuals who are part of an urban Aboriginal middle class. These individuals should be playing leadership roles and contributing to a healthy and culturally vibrant urban Aboriginal community. They are interested in expressing their Aboriginal identity in the city. Too often, however, they are alienated from the urban Aboriginal community because of such factors as racism, divisiveness within the Aboriginal community and the lack of social and cultural institutional supports. The urban Aboriginal community is “institutionally incomplete” in terms of social and cultural organizations. These institutions are critical to the development of community cohesion and cultural survival. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that, as increasing numbers of Aboriginal people become economically successful, if institutions that contribute to their social and cultural aspirations are not instituted there is a danger that the urban Aboriginal community will disappear in the future. Serious efforts, through partnerships between the Aboriginal community and governments, need to be taken to initiate such institutions to ensure a healthy urban Aboriginal community.
The findings from the Urban Aboriginal Task Force research have raised a number of important issues facing urban Aboriginal people living in Ontario’s cities that require action to resolve. While a number of urban Aboriginal people have become economically successful and have taken their place as contributing members of their communities, there remains a large segment of the urban Aboriginal populations that are suffering from serious social, cultural and economic problems and that are struggling to achieve an acceptable quality of life. The Task Force, therefore, makes the following overarching recommendations 1 to address the concerns raised in this report.

Some of the recommendations are geared to government while others pertain more to Aboriginal organizations or to the wider Aboriginal community. There is recognition that, although preliminary steps have been taken by governments to address a number of these issues, additional effort will be required in order to more effectively meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people in seeking an improved quality of life. As a result, the recommendations are intended to support existing measures, as well as stimulate the development of new policy frameworks and action plans, focusing on how to improve the overall situation of Ontario’s urban Aboriginal people.

The recommendations are organized according to themes emerging from the analysis and the conclusions discussed in the previous chap-

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1 More specific recommendations (that is, recommendations for city-specific policies and programs) are made in the five final site reports for Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Barrie/Midland/Orillia and Kenora.
ter. These, in turn, are based on the empirical findings summarized in the preceding sections of this report. In order to be consistent with the needs and the aspirations identified by the people who participated in this study, the Task Force proposes the recommendations be carried out according to the following principles:

- that they be culturally-based, that is, reflective of Aboriginal values, beliefs and practices;
- that they be characterized by meaningful accountability to the urban Aboriginal community;
- that urban Aboriginal people be involved in their planning, administration, delivery and evaluation; and
- that there be significant cooperation and coordination among the various stakeholders.

14.1 Strategic Relationships

**RECOMMENDATION 1** That a coordinated policy framework and action plan be developed in partnership between urban Aboriginal organizations and the federal and provincial governments to address urban Aboriginal issues.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** That the federal and provincial governments recognize the need to more effectively coordinate policies, programs and services including providing stable long-term funding to urban Aboriginal organizations to a level that adequately meets the needs identified by them.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** That urban Aboriginal organizations, mainstream agencies, First Nations, and federal, provincial, and municipal governments build new relationships to ensure effective coordination of both culturally-appropriate and mainstream programs and services to urban Aboriginal people.

**RECOMMENDATION 4** That the federal and provincial governments provide stable long-term funding to urban Aboriginal organizations to a level that adequately meets the needs identified by them.
**RECOMMENDATION 5** That urban Aboriginal organizations and leaders, supported by appropriate government funding, initiate the development of concerted dialogue and relationship building between themselves aimed at clarifying mandates, building capacity, improving communication exchange and meeting concrete objectives.

### 14.2 Access to opportunities

**RECOMMENDATION 6** That, building on the Government of Ontario’s First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, so that it recognizes urban Aboriginal needs, initiatives be undertaken, such as the establishment of urban Aboriginal Cultural/Educational Centres, to facilitate urban Aboriginal education and the maintenance of Aboriginal cultures in urban areas.

**RECOMMENDATION 7** That innovative and effective employment support and training programs be instituted with the goal of integrating urban Aboriginal people into the labour market.

**RECOMMENDATION 8** That partnerships be formed between Aboriginal leaders, government and representatives from the private sector and organized labour to develop economic development initiatives for urban Aboriginal people.

**RECOMMENDATION 9** That increased financial support be provided to existing urban Aboriginal housing programs and new housing initiatives be set up to increase housing units available to special groups of urban Aboriginal people such as women, youth and seniors.

### 14.3 Unique populations

**RECOMMENDATION 10** That policies and programs be developed to meet the social, cultural, recreational and employment needs of urban Aboriginal youth ensuring that Aboriginal youth themselves have a voice in those initiatives.
Recommendation 11  That the special needs of urban Aboriginal women be recognized and a strategy to address those needs be developed including the expansion of programs and services available to them.

14.4  Health and well-being

Recommendation 12  That a priority be set on more effectively meeting the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and well-being needs of urban Aboriginal people including the recognition of traditional Aboriginal healing practices.

Recommendation 13  That effective anti-racism initiatives, including general public education and media campaigns, be undertaken to address the unacceptable rates of racism endured by Aboriginal people in urban areas.

Recommendation 14  That urban Aboriginal leaders initiate a process of constructive dialogue with Aboriginal community members and organizations with a view to addressing the issue of divisiveness among urban Aboriginal people.

Recommendation 15  That in recognition of the need for the urban Aboriginal middle class to increase their participation in urban Aboriginal community life and support the maintenance of their cultural practices and expressions, initiatives be undertaken by urban Aboriginal organizations and leaders to establish institutional supports with adequate financial resources from the federal, provincial and municipal governments.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Thunder Bay

Community Advisory Committee
Anne LeSage  Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre
Bernice Dubec  Anishnawbe Mushkiki Thunder Bay Aboriginal Community Health Center
Beth Ponka  Kinna Aweya Legal Clinic
Joyce Atcheson  Ka:\nen Our Children Our Future
Dawn McKay  Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association
Rolande Veilleux  NorWest Community Health Centres (Thunder Bay)
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Alison, Fisher  Wabano
Castille Troy  Minwaashin Lodge
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Carole Baker  Georgian College
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Compton Kahn  Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre
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Jenn Leonard  Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association
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Grant Dokis  Greater Sudbury Police Services
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Don McCaskill  Research Director

Research Team
Tara Letwiniuk  Kenora Research Coordinator
Fawn Wapioke  Kenora Research Assistant
APPENDIX 2

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Thunder Bay
1. Aboriginal Agency Executive Director Key Informant Interview Guide
2. Aboriginal Agency Staff Key Informant Interview Guide
3. Non-Aboriginal Agency Key Informant Interview Guide
4. Community Member Key Informant Interview Guide
5. Youth Key Informant Interview Guide
6. Life History Interview Guide
7. Focus Group Guide
8. Plenary Session Guide
9. Community Survey

Ottawa
1. Aboriginal Agency Executive Director Key Informant Interview Guide
2. Aboriginal Agency Staff Key Informant Interview Guide
3. Community Member Key Informant Interview Guide
4. Youth Key Informant Interview Guide
5. Life History Interview Guide
6. Focus Group Guide
7. Community Survey

Barrie Midland Orillia
1. Aboriginal Agency Executive Director Key Informant Interview Guide
2. Aboriginal Agency Staff Key Informant Interview Guide
3. Community Member Key Informant Interview Guide
4. Youth Key Informant Interview Guide
5. Life History Interview Guide
6. Focus Group Guide
7. Plenary Session Guide
8. Community Survey

**Sudbury**

1. Aboriginal Agency Executive Director Key Informant Interview Guide
2. Aboriginal Agency Staff Key Informant Interview Guide
3. Non- Aboriginal Agency Key Informant Interview Guide
4. Community Member Key Informant Interview Guide
5. Life History Interview Guide
6. Focus Group Guide
7. Plenary Session Guide
8. Community Survey

**Kenora**

1. Aboriginal Agency Executive Director Key Informant Interview Guide
2. Aboriginal Agency Staff Key Informant Interview Guide
3. Non- Aboriginal Agency Key Informant Interview Guide
4. Community Member Key Informant Interview Guide
5. Life History Interview Guide
6. Focus Group Guide
7. Community Survey

Copies of all research instruments are available upon request at:
The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
219 Front Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A 1E8

ofifc@ofifc.org  www.ofifc.org

CONTACT: Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director
Appendix 3

Ethical Guidelines for Research

Applying the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s Ethical Guidelines for ‘best practice’ research, the Urban Aboriginal Task Force seeks to ensure that appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Aboriginal peoples, and to the standards used by Aboriginal peoples to legitimate knowledge.

Task Force research will be informed by the following principles:

• Aboriginal peoples have distinctive perspectives and understandings, deriving from their cultures and histories and embodied in Aboriginal languages. Research that has Aboriginal experience as its subject matter must reflect these perspectives and understandings.
• In the past, research concerning Aboriginal peoples has usually been initiated outside the Aboriginal community and carried out by non-Aboriginal personnel. Aboriginal people have had almost no opportunity to correct misinformation or to challenge ethnocentric and racist interpretations. Consequently, the existing body of research, which normally provides a reference point for new research, must be open to reassessment.
• Knowledge that is transmitted orally in the cultures of Aboriginal peoples must be acknowledged as a valuable research resource along with documentary and other sources. The means of vali-
dating knowledge in the particular traditions under study should normally be applied to establish authenticity of orally transmitted knowledge.

• In research portraying community life, the multiplicity of viewpoints present within Aboriginal communities should be represented fairly, including viewpoints specific to age and gender groups.

• Researchers have an obligation to understand and observe the protocol concerning communications within any Aboriginal community.

• Researchers have an obligation to observe ethical and professional practices relevant to their respective disciplines.

• The Task Force and its researchers undertake to accord fair treatment to all persons participating in Commission research.

Specific Research Guidelines
In all Task Force research, the researchers shall conscientiously address themselves to the following questions:

Indigenous Knowledge
1. Are there perspectives on the subject of inquiry that are distinctively Aboriginal?
2. What Aboriginal sources are appropriate to shed light on those perspectives?
3. Is proficiency in an Aboriginal language required to explore these perspectives and sources?
4. Are there particular protocols or approaches required to access the relevant knowledge?
5. Does Aboriginal knowledge challenge in any way assumptions brought to the subject from previous research?
6. How will Aboriginal knowledge or perspectives portrayed in research be validated?
7. Informed consent shall be obtained from all persons and groups participating in research. Such consent may be given by individuals whose personal experience is being portrayed, by groups in assembly, or by authorized representatives of communities or organizations.
8. Consent should ordinarily be obtained in writing. Where this is not practical, the procedures used in obtaining consent should be recorded.

9. Individuals or groups participating in research shall be provided with information about the purpose and nature of the research activities, including expected benefits and risks.

10. No pressure shall be applied to induce participation in research.

11. Participants should be informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

12. Participants should be informed of the degree of confidentiality that will be maintained in the study.

13. Informed consent of parents or guardian and, where practical, of children should be obtained in research involving children.

**Collaborative Research**

1. In studies located principally in Aboriginal communities, researchers shall establish collaborative procedures to enable community representatives to participate in the planning, execution and evaluation of research results.

2. In studies that are carried out in the general community and that are likely to affect particular Aboriginal communities, consultation on planning, execution and evaluation of results shall be sought through appropriate Aboriginal bodies.

3. In community-based studies, researchers shall ensure that a representative cross-section of community experiences and perceptions is included.

4. The convening of advisory groups to provide guidance on the conduct of research shall not pre-empt the procedures laid down in this part but shall supplement them.

5. Review of research results shall be solicited both from the Aboriginal community and the scholarly community prior to publication.

**Access to Research Results**

1. The UATF shall maintain a policy of open public access to final reports of research activities. Reports may be circulated in draft form, where scholarly and Aboriginal community response at this stage is deemed useful for UATF purposes.
2. Research reports or parts thereof shall not be published where there are reasonable grounds for thinking that publication will violate the privacy of individuals or cause significant harm to participating Aboriginal communities or organizations.

3. Results of community research shall be distributed as widely as possible within participating communities, and reasonable efforts shall be made to present results in non-technical language and Aboriginal languages where appropriate.

**Community Benefit**

1. In setting research priorities and objectives for community-based research, the Commission and the researchers it engages shall give serious and due consideration to the benefit of the community concerned.

2. In assessing community benefit, regard shall be given to the widest possible range of community interests, regardless of whether the groups in question are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, and also to the impact of research at the local, regional or national level. Wherever possible, conflicts between interests within the community should be identified and resolved in advance of commencing the project. Researchers should be equipped to draw on a range of problem-solving strategies to resolve such conflicts as may arise in the course of research.

3. Whenever possible research should support the transfer of skills to individuals and thereby increase the capacity of the community to manage its own research.

**Implementation**

1. These guidelines shall be included in all research contracts with individuals, groups, agencies, organizations and communities conducting research sponsored by the Task Force.

2. It shall be the responsibility, in the first instance, of all researchers to observe these guidelines conscientiously. It shall be the responsibility, in ascending order, of the Research Assistants, Community Research Coordinators, the Research Associates, the Research Director, and the Task Force to monitor the implementation of the guidelines and to make decisions regarding their interpretation and application.
3. Where, in the opinion of the researcher or the research manager, the nature of the research or local circumstances make these guidelines or any part of them inapplicable, such exception shall be reported to the Task Force’s Director of Research, and the exception shall be noted in the research contract or contract amendments as well as in any publication resulting from the research.

**Ethics Review Board (ERB)**

In the case of questions and/or considerations that fall outside of these guidelines and which require further review, an Ethics Review Board (consisting of Task Force representatives, Elders, and representatives of the academic community) will be formed and will review the outstanding issue and provide recommendations to the Task Force.
A DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Key Informant Interview Guides

The local Research Team, Research Director and Associate developed the Key Informant Interview guides based on a series of discussions with the Task Force and the CACs, whose approvals were necessary for the interviews to begin. There were five main types of interview guides developed, though not all were utilized in each site. Importantly, each of the research instruments was pre-tested. Table A1 outlines the key informant interview guide topics and categories of respondents for each site.

The Executive Director (ED) Interview Guide was the main template used to ask the full breadth of questions, including questions specific to the organization and clients. The Staff Key Informant Interview Guide had generally the same questions as the ED guide, though it did not in-

<table>
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<th>Key informant interview type</th>
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</table>
clude specific questions concerning the larger political and administrative context of the organization. The Community Member guide included questions that focused on a variety of issues relating to the established research priorities of each site.

The key informant interviews were intended as a semi-structured discussion with the respondents that focused on answering specific questions while allowing for some unstructured time for broader conversation. The guides themselves were organized around a series of open-ended and closed questions, and the research participants often provided examples and stories that complemented and expanded their responses. As well, interviews were completed predominantly on an individual basis, and as previously discussed; interviewees were recommended by the CAC or chosen by the researchers based on snowball sampling and personal contacts. A diversity of community members including seniors, the homeless and youth participated in the research and every effort was made to be as inclusive as possible in the research sample.

Appendix 2 provides a list of all the research instruments used in the study.

**Life Histories**

The life history component of the qualitative research provided the most in-depth information concerning the participants’ biographical experiences about living in their particular city. We are especially grateful to those participants who generously shared their time and their stories, which were at times quite difficult for them to tell. The UATF paid a $150 honorarium to life history participants in recognition of their contributions.

The life history interview guide was developed by the local Research Team, the Research Director and Associate, and was approved by the local CAC which also suggested appropriate life history participants. The life history interview was mostly unstructured, using only general topics for the respondents to speak to. The informal nature of the life histories made each one distinct, with respondents determining the foci and emphasis placed on their story.
Focus groups

As a research instrument, the focus group is a method of bringing a diversity of related perspectives together in a semi-structured conversation so as to facilitate a cooperative exploration of a particular topic. In terms of this research, the number of focus group participants ranged from 7 to 12 and points of discussion were proposed both as a focus of conversation as well as a starting point for a broader dialogue. As well, some of the focus groups took place during organized community events, while others were organized independently. The topics of the focus groups were determined by the CAC and the local Research Team and, in conjunction with the other research instruments, corresponded with the overall local research priorities. Importantly, youth and women’s issues were the most common topics for the focus groups within all sites. Table A2 shows the sample of respondents for focus group topics across all UATF cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Thunder Bay</th>
<th>Ottawa</th>
<th>BMO</th>
<th>Sudbury</th>
<th>Kenora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal agencies</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic success</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Government relations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic development and employment</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Family</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential school survivors</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing and homelessness</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Elders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children and education</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaps in services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture and identity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table A2 Sample size per focus group topic (across cities)
Plenary sessions

Closely related to the focus group, plenary sessions are also a way of bringing a diversity of participants together with the common goal of exploring a topic cooperatively. What distinguishes these two methods is that the plenary session consists of a larger number of people and the group breaks off into a number of smaller focus groups for discussion. These smaller groups then record responses and present back to the larger group for a broader, collective conversation among all participants. This method therefore allows for a greater number of perspectives to be brought to bear on a single topic. The topics of the plenary session were co-determined with the CAC and the local Research Team and, in conjunction with the other research instruments, corresponded with the overall local research priorities. Ottawa and Kenora chose not to apply this particular research method. Table A3 shows the sample of respondents for plenary session topics across all UATF cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Thunder Bay</th>
<th>Ottawa</th>
<th>BMO</th>
<th>Sudbury</th>
<th>Kenora</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies</td>
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<td>Employment and training</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal arts and artists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
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<td>Racism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service delivery</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Final Report

From 2005 through to early 2007, the Urban Aboriginal Task Force, a partnership of Aboriginal organizations and government agencies, oversaw community-based research in five urban sites: Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Barrie/Midland/Orillia, and Kenora. Designed to shed new light on on-going struggles and critical new developments taking place in urban Aboriginal communities across the province, the project investigated racism, homelessness, poverty, youth, women, and health, also considering broader concerns of culture and identity, gaps in delivery of services, Elders and long-term care, women and children, access to resources, and assessment of Aboriginal services.

The preparation of the Final Report of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force has been informed by the the five site reports. It is our hope that the Final Report will initiate a new wave of positive, cooperative policy, programme, and legislative change aimed at improving the quality of life for all urban Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Additional copies of this report are available for download from www.ofifc.org.