Urban Aboriginal Participation in Policy Development

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- In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the Prince Albert Métis Women’s Association, and the Prince Albert Indian Métis Friendship Centre.
- In Winnipeg, Manitoba, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, and the Circle of Life Thunderbird House.
- In Ottawa, Ontario, the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the Odowa Native Friendship Centre.
- In Montreal, Quebec, the First People’s House at McGill University, the Montreal Native Friendship Centre Inc., and the Mohawk Drum Group.
- In Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Mi’kmaq Native Friendship Centre, and the Kitpu Youth Association.

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In conclusion, we would like to thank the Urban Aboriginal Strategy coordinators and the Office of the Federal Interlocutor.
Executive Summary

The Centre for Native Policy and Research (CNPR) recently undertook a national research study entitled “Urban Aboriginal Participation in Policy Development” (UAP), the objective being to provide an understanding of how and when urban Aboriginal people participate in policy development.

The UAP was designed to answer questions such as: When is the appropriate time to engage the urban Aboriginal community in policy development? Who should be engaged? How could the Aboriginal community meaningfully participate with the Canadian government? And, what capacity is necessary for the urban Aboriginal community to effectively participate in policy development?

In order to address these questions the CNPR gathered information through individual interviews, Talking Circles and Community Forums in the following seven urban centres: Vancouver, BC; Ft. McMurray, AB; Prince Albert, SK; Winnipeg, MB; Ottawa, ON; Montreal, QB; and Halifax; NS. In those seven cities we spoke to and heard from Aboriginal community members, Elders, youth, leaders, people in various service providing agencies and/or Aboriginal organizations.

For a holistic view of the Aboriginal perspectives voiced throughout this report, it is important to acknowledge the areas of discussion are inter-related and interconnected throughout all aspects of Aboriginal peoples’ lives. Although many areas of concern were discussed, the fundamental focus of self-determination and the capacity of Aboriginal peoples to determine the solutions for their futures is pivotal in shaping Aboriginal policy development.

Background on the Centre for Native Policy and Research

The Centre for Native Policy and Research (CNPR) was conceived in September 2003 by a group of young Aboriginal leaders in the Lower Mainland, and was incorporated in British Columbia as a Society on November 2, 2004. The CNPR has formed a partnership with the Greater Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy (GVUAS) Research and Policy Working Group as a Working Group Project.

The Centre is a non-partisan, social justice, progressive Aboriginal think tank. Our focus is on the social, economic, and environmental policy and research concerns of Aboriginal people in British Columbia and Canada. Although over fifty percent of all Aboriginal people now live in urban areas, there is a lack of research and policy analysis on issues important to the growing urban Aboriginal population. The Centre is a bridge that encourages collaborative solutions by bringing people together beyond politics to promote participatory research, policy alternatives, and hope.
The mission of the CNPR is to be a catalyst for change through the development and promotion of credible social, economic, and environmental policy and research. The Centre is rooted in the Aboriginal community, and is committed to Aboriginal self-determination and social justice.

CNPR Governance Structure

The Centre has developed a unique governance structure in response to the needs of the Aboriginal community. The policy of the Centre is established and governed by the Board of Directors. Currently the Board of Directors is composed of the original founding directors of the Society, and by appointment. The combination of elected and appointed Directors is to ensure consistency, and protection of the integrity of the Centre as a research institute. The Board of Directors has Male and Female Youth Representative seats and an Elder Representative seat.

The connection to the Aboriginal community was established and is maintained through the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. The Centre is currently working with Aboriginal youth organizations to engage youth in a structure that can oversee research and policy related to Aboriginal youth issues.

Academic rigor and peer review is maintained through the Research Advisory Committee composed of academics, researchers, and analysts who have expertise in Aboriginal issues.
Introduction

The Centre for Native Policy and Research concentrates its work on the social, economic, and environmental policy and research concerns of Aboriginal people in British Columbia and Canada.

On March 4, 2003, a Working Group of members from several urban Aboriginal stakeholders hosted the Pacific Urban Aboriginal Policy Research Conference in Vancouver, BC. Through the discussions that occurred, many recommendations were introduced on how to overcome gaps in Aboriginal policy and research. These recommendations focused on: the lack of statistics and Aboriginal research standards; the need for increased training and education in research, policy and statistics; the need for more partnerships, services, and supports; a commitment to improving Aboriginal health; and, increased autonomy and decision making.

The Centre proposed to address the gap in Aboriginal social, economic, and environmental policy analysis and research that currently exists, as there is an evident lack in these areas. Furthermore, the Centre focuses on urban Aboriginal issues; while over fifty percent of all Aboriginal people now live in urban areas, there is a lack of research and policy analysis on issues important to the growing urban Aboriginal population.

Urban Aboriginal Strategy

In January 1998, the Canadian government established the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) as a means to improve program and service delivery by strengthening the coordinated approach to policy and program development. The UAS, through various collaborative efforts and partnerships with all levels of government, and Aboriginal organizations seeks to address the socio-economic needs of urban Aboriginal people. Currently there are pilot projects funded through the UAS in eight different urban locations. The pilot projects are intended to test new ideas on how to better respond, through partnership, to the local needs of urban Aboriginal people. The UAS also funds and supports local Aboriginal organizations to participate in the UAS, the work of regional federal officials and research. (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2006)

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1 This working group was composed of representatives from the Urban Aboriginal Strategy Committee; the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services; the Vancouver Agreement Executive Coordination Unit; and the urban Aboriginal community.
Urban Aboriginal Participation in Policy Development Research Project

The Urban Aboriginal Participation in Policy Development research project (UAP) arose through dialogue between the CNPR and officials at the Office of the Federal Interlocutor, the Ministry responsible for overseeing the UAS initiative. The objective of this research is to provide an understanding of how and when urban Aboriginal people participate in policy development. The CNPR felt it was necessary to conduct this research as a means to address the gap in community-based research and policy analysis from an Aboriginal perspective on a topic of significant importance to the increasing numbers of Aboriginal people living in urban centres.

The research project was designed to answer the following questions:

- When is it the appropriate time to engage the urban Aboriginal community in policy development?
- Who should be engaged?
- How could the Aboriginal community meaningfully participate with the Canadian government?
- And, what capacity is necessary for the urban Aboriginal community to effectively participate in policy development?

Site Selection

The CNPR, in conjunction with officials at the Office of the Federal Interlocutor, selected the following sites to represent a national cross-selection between both small and large UAS cities and non-UAS cities and representative of the diversity of the Aboriginal population.

1. Vancouver, BC
2. Ft. McMurray, AB
3. Prince Albert, SK
4. Winnipeg, MB
5. Ottawa, ON
6. Halifax, NB
7. Montreal, QC
Summary of UAP Research Project
There are numerous areas in which Canadian policy and legislation impact the lives of Aboriginal People. Due the number of different Canadian governmental departments, each with specific mandates and priorities to address specific areas of jurisdiction, policy can be a difficult process to understand for the average Canadian person. However, for Aboriginal peoples to relate to a foreign system of governance that has historical imposed colonial policies is not only viewed as difficult but is also seen as unjust.

This report will present the main themes found in the UAP research project based on the people we spoke to and their view of participation in urban Aboriginal policy development. The majority of this report will present quotes from individuals in the interview stage since comments made by people in the latter stages reiterated similar perspectives and provided the focus or direction they wished to see in this report.

We present how urban Aboriginal people viewed their involvement in the policy process in order to learn their perspectives; who are the people that should be involved, when, and how Aboriginal policy could be developed.

When discussing the topic of policy development many people were skeptical of the full participation of Aboriginal people as true partners within the Canadian system and had much criticism of past and current processes in the creation of policies. In response to this criticism, many participants viewed self-determination as the necessary basis for direct involvement of Aboriginal people to develop policies according to Indigenous perspectives and cultural understanding. In this research, Urban Aboriginal people participation in policy development can be simply summarized as direct involvement as means to become self-determining peoples.

However, the diversity of distinct peoples that currently live in urban locations along with the various jurisdictional levels create complex situations in attempts to achieve control of their lives and futures. There were people who questioned how urban Aboriginal policy development could encompass the diversity of Aboriginal people residing in urban centres if developed from a national top down approach. Many participants stated the development of policy for urban Aboriginal people should begin at the local levels, should be inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples and not limited only to urban residence.

People also discussed and presented numerous ways in which capacity could be developed in order for Aboriginal people to learn and become more involved in policy.

This report will then conclude with a summary of the recommendations to develop Aboriginal Policy to be more in keeping with Indigenous perspectives made by people in the UAP Research project.
Research Methodologies

Research Team
The research team for this project consisted of the entire staff of the CNPR: Tammy Dorward, Lead Researcher; Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Researcher; Cheryl Matthew, former Executive Director; Natasha Slack, former Office Manager; and Kinwa Bluesky, Research Coordinator.

In keeping with Indigenous methodologies of Aboriginal control and direction of research that is grounded in the community, the following local project assistants were also instrumental in this project: Annita McPhee, Vancouver, BC; Gitz (Ryan) Derange, Fort McMurray, AB; Brennan Manoakeesick, Winnipeg, MB; Jocelyn Formsma, Ottawa, ON; Tina Pisuktie, Montreal, QB; and Nancy Paul, Halifax, NS.

Participant Selection
The CNPR employed a number of methods to identify potential participants: personal contacts, organizations, community members, Internet, and the assistance of UAS coordinators. Through the use of purposive sampling or snowball techniques, the CNPR contacted (via telephone, email and fax) various organizations and individuals in the seven cities, who either agreed to participate themselves in this research project or offered us a list of potential names and contact information of other individuals who may be willing to participate. The forwarding of our information by recipients also assisted us to reach a wider network of people. We did receive several email responses and telephone calls from people outside of the selected urban locations who wanted to be involved and wanted to know if the UAP research project would be conducted in other cities.

The researchers, Tammy Dorward and Ginger Gosnell-Myers also made site visits to Aboriginal organizations and/or events while in the seven locations. We found this manner worked best to locate and meet potential participants in their own urban environments. After we made personal introductions and initial conversations were started we often found personal connections to people and discovered ‘Indian country’ and our lives are really quite connected. When people were more familiar or comfortable with us, they were then more willing to participate or offered us names or places where we could possibly find people that would be interested.

The people who participated in this research project were Status Indians, Non-status Indians, Inuit and Métis People who comprised a cross section of individual community members, community advocates, leaders, youth, Elders, and those affiliated with urban Aboriginal organizations. Participants were also selected for gender and age parity. It should be noted that all participants in this report do not represent or speak on behalf of any Aboriginal organization or political affiliation but chose to represent his or her individual perspective.
Methodology

Through society and in particular the academy it has been argued that Indigenous voice has been silenced in western academy, which established western theory (Smith, 1999). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland outlines the necessary process that Indigenous researchers must undertake to “decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity” (1999, p.23). To accomplish this, she argues that Indigenous people must “tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes” (1999, p.28) through an Indigenous research agenda of community research that is focused on self-determination.

The CNPR Urban Aboriginal Research project has been influenced by community-based action research or participatory action research (PAR), which contains aspects that are supportive of Indigenous research methods. PAR is “a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems” (Stringer, 1999, p.17). PAR is conducive to working within the Aboriginal community as part of its methodological underpinnings is to seek to equalize unequal power relation dynamics to ensure that research is non-competitive and non-exploitative for those who participate (Glesne, 1999; Stringer, 1999). In addition, PAR attempts to return a sense of involvement and inclusiveness, and ultimately power, back to the people who are a part of the research. Furthermore, Aboriginal people have traditionally used consensus-based models of decision-making, which is a keystone of the action research approach.

To explore the research questions regarding urban Aboriginal participation, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews, which encompass traditional information-sharing methods such as oral tradition, and the sharing of stories and experiences. We also scheduled in each location Sharing Circles also known as Talking Circles. These Circles were focused group discussions and allow traditional exchange of information based on equality, respect, and learning from one another. Community Forums were also organized on this topic for community members at large to review and provide input on the findings or main themes emerging from the interviews and to ensure important points were highlighted.

Research Methods

1. Interviews

The research team, in conjunction with individuals from the seven urban centres developed an initial list of potential participants or places to find potential participants. It was anticipated a minimum of 15 to 20 interviews would be conducted in each location. However difficulties due to scheduling, along with availability and willingness
of people, prevented the completion of the minimum number of interviews in several of the cities.

Informed consent forms were used to ensure all participants were fully knowledgeable of the project and any potential causes for concern. With the permission of participants, interviews were audio-recorded. [All except three interviews were recorded] The interviews were later transcribed and upon request, participants were sent a copy of his/her transcript. Interview transcripts were themed to search for common responses to draw conclusions regarding urban Aboriginal participation.

The interviews took place in each of the seven urban locations beginning June 2006 and were ongoing until March 2007 with a total of 93 interviews² being conducted³. Tammy Dorward and Ginger Gosnell-Myers conducted the interviews in the seven locations. The length of the interviews varied from eight minutes to 2 hours with an average interview length being approximately thirty minutes. There were forty-nine female participants, and forty-four male participants in the interview stage.

The following table is a summary of the number of interviews conducted in each city.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Interviews in each city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vancouver, BC</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fort McMurray, AB</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prince Albert, SK</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Winnipeg, MB</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Montreal, QB</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Halifax, NS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of interviews** 93

² Due to technical difficulties one interview was deleted.

³ However, Aboriginal people from nearby cities were included if/when they wished to participate.
2. Sharing Circles and/or Talking Circles

The Sharing Circle, also known as the Talking Circle, has its origins in Indigenous societies. The Sharing Circle or Talking Circle is a tool that can foster respect, build listening skills, and resolve conflict. Using the Sharing Circle or Talking Circle for this research was viewed necessary to employ traditional methods as a means to share information and build consensus.

After the individual interviews, the research team worked collectively to identify and invite community members and previous interview participants interested in continuing dialogue on the topic.

The UAP Sharing Circles were first conducted in the winter of 2006 in six of the locations, leaving the circle in Vancouver to be scheduled in the spring of 2007, however the timing\(^4\) and inadequate notice prevented the anticipated turn out for the Sharing Circles. This led to the hiring of local youth as Project Assistants in six of the seven cities\(^5\). The research team felt that a local youth would be beneficial in a number of ways for all involved; the youth, the local community and the CNPR. The CNPR advocates for Aboriginal research to be conducted by Aboriginal people and grounded in the Aboriginal community. Therefore, the addition of local youth to the research team promoted the involvement of local community members in the UAP. As well, through the promotion of developing research capacity within Aboriginal communities, youth were provided with an opportunity and the experience of being involved in this research project. Furthermore, the youth provided assistance by inviting local community members by word of mouth or by promoting and notifying the larger community of the upcoming events through the use of flyers and advertisements. Most importantly, all involved with the UAP followed the youth’s understanding of the local urban Aboriginal community along with the knowledge of local protocol and ensuring these were respected. The youth were also responsible for personally contacting local Elders to participate in the circles.

After the hiring of Youth Research Project Assistants, the circles were then repeated in February and March 2007. As well, the research team felt the use of the name ‘Sharing Circles may not clearly convey the intent of the circles in relation to this research project. The decision was made to change the name from ‘UAP Sharing Circle’ to ‘UAP Talking Circles on Aboriginal Policy Development.’

The UAP Talking Circles consisted of Aboriginal service providers and interested community members and allowed for group discussions whereby people could share

\(^4\) In places such as Prince Albert and Ottawa, the weather conditions and local weather warnings prevented people from attending the events.

\(^5\) Despite advertisements for the youth research participant, we did not receive applications for the Prince Albert position.
their knowledge and provide their comments on urban Aboriginal participation in policy development. The members of the research team that facilitated the Talking Circles depending upon the locations were: Tammy Dorward, Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Cheryl Matthew, and the local youth project assistant. When an Elder was present in each of these circles he/she not only opened and closed with prayer, but also was integral in guiding the direction of the discussions, often by the questions or comments made to members of the research team.

The Talking Circles were scheduled in the early morning or early afternoon depending upon the availability of spaces and lasted approximately 2 to 2 ½ hours. Although the circles were open to all who wished to attend, the timing of the circles was a factor that prevented people who were not employed in service providing agencies and Aboriginal organizations from attending. However, the turnout for the circles also depended upon people’s availability. For example, the following table outlines the locations and people in attendance.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>UAP Sharing Circle</th>
<th>UAP Talking Circle (on Aboriginal Policy Development)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver, BC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort McMurray, AB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Albert, SK</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg, MB</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal, QB</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax, NS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number or people</td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A set of four questions was brought to each circle (see Appendix B) and with the consent of the group each circle was audio-recorded.\(^6\) These questions were formulated based on the emerging themes that were found in the interview stage. These questions were used to guide the group discussions and to have people further elaborate on the policy

\(^6\) Due to time constraints the circle recordings were not transcribed for this report.
process and Aboriginal peoples. The majority of the people at these UAP Circles were service providers within various Aboriginal organizations. Based on their employment experiences many of the circle attendees had working knowledge of the needs of their clients and how various policies guided their ability to address these needs, and if not why.

3. Community Forums
Community Forums were organized on the topic of urban Aboriginal participation after the interviews and circles had been completed. The UAP Community Forums were also scheduled in the seven locations in February and March 2007. Similar to the Talking Circles, the facilitators for these Forums depending upon location were: Tammy Dorward, Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Cheryl Matthew, and the local youth project assistant.

In these forums the CNPR research team shared the main themes emerging from the interviews with the urban Aboriginal community-at-large. These themes were the recurring topics that we heard throughout the seven locations and were not tailored to one specific city. In keeping with a model of community-based action research, the CNPR sought a collaborative model of input regarding the recommendations to be reviewed by the local Aboriginal communities.

Since Friendship Centre’s are often well known by many Aboriginal people within urban locations and have the capacity to hold large numbers, the UAP Community Forums were held at local Friendship Centre’s, with the exception of Winnipeg which took place at the Circle of Life Thunderbird House.

The Community Forums were scheduled later in the afternoon from 3:30pm to 6:30pm with an approximate turnout of 7 – 35 participants, depending upon the location. Again it is believed that the timing of the events prevented a higher number of people attending. However, numerous people throughout this project reminded us that if a feast or refreshments had been provided then more people may have been at the events.

Although the numbers were not large, the people who did attend had much to say and kept our pencils busy! We did not audio-record the Community Forum discussions for the following reasons; we were unsure of the number of attendees and if our microphones would adequately record all comments; and we did not want to inhibit people from freely speaking. Instead we opted to have members of the research team take notes.

In Montreal’s Community Forum a difficulty we encountered in this research was the language aspect, since we are all English speaking people at the CNPR. The Montreal project assistant, Tina Pisuktie, informed us Aboriginal Francophone people in Quebec would be offended and feel neglected if the promotional notices and the event were
only in the English language. Based on Tina’s recommendation, the CNPR hired a French translator to be present at the Community Forum.\(^7\) Tina also had the Community Forum notices translated into French. Unfortunately, due to the timing, the research team did not have our interview summary handout for the Forum translated into French. It is unknown whether it was this factor alone that disturbed a couple of the Francophone participants. A woman verbalized her displeasure with CNPR and the Montreal Community Forum was criticized as not being a ‘true consultation process.’ However, the objective of this research project was to carry out research and the CNPR did not present or intend for the UAP to be viewed as a consultation process.

**Ethics and Informed Consent**

Due to the extensive legacy of improper and imposed research regarding Aboriginal peoples, any and all research projects need to conform to established ethical principles. Aboriginal people and communities have in the past been unknowing subjects of research projects, have not benefited from research that they have been involved in, and have had little involvement, access, or control of the research projects or the subsequent information gathered (Schnarch, 2004). Such research conduct has resulted in strained relationships between Aboriginal peoples and researchers, leading to a resistance to research on the part of some Aboriginal peoples (RCAP, 1996).

In order to address many of the past injustices and to promote proper ethical research, many organizations have developed ethical principles and guidelines regarding the conduct of research among Aboriginal people and communities (e.g. Schnarch 2004; ACUNS 1998; Masuzumi and Quirk 1993). The CNPR is currently beginning the process of developing an Indigenous Research methodology guideline. As well, many academic institutions have research ethics boards to provide ethical guidelines and consent to research, although such boards do not necessarily address Aboriginal issues or have Aboriginal participation (Schnarch 2004).

All research conducted by the CNPR at a minimum conforms to guidelines described in the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (MRCC, NSERC, and SSHRC 2003). These principles are guidelines to ensure the respectful treatment and human dignity of all people involved as participants in a research project.

Additionally, the CNPR is working to ensure its research meets ethical principles above and beyond the previously mentioned guidelines. The CNPR encourages and supports research that meets the ethical principles outlined by respective Aboriginal communities where research has been conducted, or outlined in other Aboriginal-relevant guidelines,

\(^7\) A French translator was also hired to be present at the Montreal UAP Talking Circle.
such as the OCAP principles (Schnarch, 2004) or the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies’ (ACUNS) Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North.

The principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) are quickly being supported by many Aboriginal research organizations and the Centre supports and follows the principles as outlined by OCAP. Ownership of the data gathered in the study will remain with the individuals and sharing circle members. However, the CNPR will hold the data and act as stewards of the information. The participants will have access to their information, and information will only be distributed with the consent of participants, and will maintain the confidentiality of all participants.\(^8\)

Informed consent was obtained from all participants both verbally and written\(^9\) through the use of consent forms, which also outlined the research project. The consent form also outlined any potential concerns and/or possible threats from participating, ownership, control, and access principles of the data, future use of data, and contact information. Participants were informed prior to the interview commencing verbally and in writing, with their permission the interview would be audio-recorded. Each participant was offered a copy of an unsigned consent form and contact information for the CNPR.

**Identity of Participants**

In the UAP interviews there were 77 people of Indigenous or First Nation ancestry from various nations; there were 9 people who considered Métis to be their primary identity, and also 4 Inuit living within urban centres. In addition, there were 3 (non-Aboriginal) Canadians who had some form of connection to Aboriginal peoples that also participated in this research project.

In the interview process 72 out of 93 participants acknowledged self-identifying as Aboriginal. However, there were 12 people who strongly opposed and did not consider themselves to be Aboriginal. These people self-identified based on their ancestral origins or as Indigenous people. There were 2 people who did not respond to the question, 2 others self-identified ‘only some of the time,’ 1 participant felt she had no choice as governments imposed it, and 1 participant stated others defined his identity based upon his appearance.

In the UAP Talking Circles there were in total 59 participants and in the UAP Community Forums, there was an approximate range of 7 – 35 participants, which made it much more difficult to record people’s names and identities. Yet in the circle round of

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\(^8\) However, the majority of people gave permission to use their full or partial name in the reports.

\(^9\) With the exception of one woman who did not wish to sign a consent form and offered her explanation that we are an oral culture and that by giving her word, her permission was granted.
introductions each person stated his/her ancestral roots and/or the nation to which s/he belonged. In fact, not a single participant used “Aboriginal” as a primary identification to introduce him or herself.

Regardless of current urban residence, whether or not one was raised on an Indian reserve, a Métis settlement, or Inuit community, urban Aboriginal peoples’ connection to their ancestral roots was the primary factor of determining their distinct identities as Indigenous peoples of this land.
UAP Research Findings

Elder Dennis Morrison, at the Winnipeg UAP Community Forum asserted that we must be respectful of the stories people told to us and how the truths of their stories are written (personal communication, February 27, 2007). It is on this note we present the findings from the UAP research project.

Aboriginal Voices

The first and most fundamental concern we found in this research project was the issue of Aboriginal voice. Many people declared Aboriginal peoples are not heard within Canadian society and especially by the Canadian governments. Numerous examples and stories were provided regarding the historical dismissal of Aboriginal voice from the time of the Treaties to the present day situations. The majority of people expressed their desire to voice their perspectives regarding Aboriginal peoples, social concerns, and policy development. However, many questioned whether their voices would be heard and respected by those in positions of power regardless whether those decision-makers were in Aboriginal governance structures or Canadian government positions.

I would like to have a say to someone that would actually listen. I sat on a lot of committees and groups; I've had my say and knowing my say was put on a shelf somewhere and never acted on. It would be nice to have a say that was actually listened to and actually acted upon. (Janet Carriere, personal communication, August 24, 2006).

Also many participants were unsure how to even accomplish action in areas of concern. It was indicated by participants that Aboriginal people have been speaking out for a long time but who really hears their voices? In this research project when listening to their stories, there were points, which conveyed a sense of despair as we also heard repeatedly ‘nobody listens.’ However, the perseverance of Aboriginal peoples is evident in the continuation of voicing concerns despite the belief that ‘nobody is listening.’

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with historical and current Canadian legislative Acts and subsequent policies administered to oversee the management of Indigenous peoples thereby removing all shreds of humanity and human dignity.

The policies that are created for Aboriginals is thinking of them in terms of dependence and that we don’t have our own voice. Or that we aren’t equal in terms of the ideas we can bring to the table. Or we don’t know what we need and we need to be told what we need. There needs to be more of a voice and equality because we are human beings. In terms of our community, we know what we've been through and we know what we need. In terms of policy, to constantly have to
be told what we need is degrading and humiliating and oppressive.
(Deana Michel, personal communication, July 26, 2006).

In Montreal, Waneek Horn-Miller summarized the plight of Indigenous people in Canada and the application of colonial policies that have stifled Aboriginal voices by stating:

For so many generations we have been spoken to and implemented on and eventually you come to understand your voice doesn’t matter or you’re not going to say anything. (Waneek Horn-Miller, personal communication, November 23, 2006. Emphases in original).

However, Aboriginal people stated if there was a process by which they could reaffirm their human dignity, this could lead to finding the strength to determine the focus for the future benefit of all Aboriginal people affected by policy.

If Aboriginal people, Indigenous people could reaffirm their dignity, their human dignity I think they would find a voice to say what’s inside in front of a lot of people to really say things and what should happen. (Nahka Bertrand, personal communication, August 14, 2006).

Critique of current policy process
A second but equally pressing concern expressed by participants regarding policy development was the very process and the mechanisms by which this is accomplished is not in accordance to governance structures of Indigenous peoples. Polices are not created based on Indigenous perspectives and there is “a need to find a way to build our own foundation” rather than having “programs and policies designed in Ottawa” before being shipped out to Aboriginal Communities (*Jack, personal communication, July 24, 2006).10 The people we spoke to often raised examples of historical colonial policies and vocalized their concerns with these. Trudy Lavallee attested to the numerous accounts of policies created to assimilate Indigenous peoples.

We’ve seen policies in the past that were very assimilated and colonalist driven and written you know derogatory and condescending. There are a lot of stories out there. (Trudy Lavallee, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

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10 For the anonymity of some participants, pseudonyms preceded by an asterisk are used in place of their real names. However, these participants did give permission to identify his/her urban location.
Many participants viewed policies written for Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people will inevitably lead to failure, as history has repeatedly shown.

*History of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is that policy has been made by non-Aboriginal people that pertain to Aboriginal people and as a result it's easily had negative effects on Aboriginal people. Look at education and Aboriginal people here at residential schools. That was a failed policy.* (Maeengan Linklater, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

If people do not feel they have true legitimate decision making powers or any means by which to address the imbalance of power, it is not a system that they will claim as their own or utilize.

*You can't have limited participation in policy development it has to be full or nothing because if you don't involve the Aboriginal population along the way they're not going to think of it as their own and they will reject that policy.* (Darren H. Courchene, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

There were also people who also expressed that the very system is a form of systemic and institutionalized racism.

*I think we need greater inclusion in those processes then we do have at the moment and that's an example of systemic racism you know because we aren't involved in policy development and even to suggest that we should participate in policy development without any really meaningful participation is an example of racism in itself.* (Marlyn Bennet, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

There were people who spoke of policy being developed and created from a “top down” approach and to be “dictated” without Aboriginal peoples input.

*There are probably tons of examples but I’ve seen too many times where governments have created policy or dictated policy to Aboriginal people and most of the time a lot of those policies just weren't beneficial or was what that community or Aboriginal people wanted.* (Nathan McCorrister, personal communication, July 30, 2006).

In order for Aboriginal people to have meaningful input the consultation must be conducted according to the true meaning of consultation as outlined in RCAP (1996). This refers to respecting and truly listening to all sectors of the community and ensuring the opportunity for input is provided for all people. In this research, many Aboriginal
people based on their past experiences did not view consultations conducted by the governments to be proper consultations whereby open dialogue and input was actively encouraged.

Aboriginal people criticized various consultation processes in which government representatives were not present to receive information from Aboriginal people, but to only to provide information of the decisions already made by governments. Participants in this research expressed their desires for more thorough, inclusive consultations.

*You need to leave the door open for participation. Thorough consultations need to occur, not just a phone call. (*Challis, personal communication, December 5, 2006).*

*Consultation processes need to be happening, ongoing, and not a cookie cutter approach to consultation. (Guy Lonechild, personal communication, August 27, 2006).*

*If the federal government is able to take into consideration that to identify the issues they need to consult with Aboriginal people because Aboriginal people are most likely have the answers to the issues they are facing. And would be able to address those issues on their own accord. And that's the reason why I think and why I believe that the Aboriginal people need to be more involved in policy development. (Maeengan Linklater, personal communication, July 28, 2006).*

*What I see is very often the decisions have already been made before policy gets put into practice and that decision has already been made without any urban Aboriginal input and personally that upsets me. Even when you think you’re contributing and it’s going to make a difference, it’s like they [Canadian governments] have already made that decision and they're just doing their token little ‘we want your input,’ but really they don’t. (Gloria Mahussier, personal communication, August 25, 2006).*

Another common grievance we heard from participants with the current process of developing policy was the manner in which Aboriginal input was perceived. Often Aboriginal input was viewed to be very minimal and/or tokenistic without providing any real contribution. Referring to “tokenism” the following person explained,

*Those who are in power make it look like they are sharing some of their power when they invite first Nations are Aboriginal or urban Aboriginal people to participate, when in reality they are not. They [Aboriginal People] don't get a share of that power-making process and that's the thing that needs to change. It really needs to be some
kind of way in which to share the power over everything because that's the whole issue and that's exactly what racism is about - who holds the reins of power. Aboriginal people don't hold those reins of power. It's still an ‘us and them’ environment and that's what I mean by tokenism. There is an illusion that there is power sharing when you invite urban Aboriginal people to participate in policy development but sometimes those in power don’t like to hear what Aboriginal people say when it comes to policy development. (Marlyn Bennet, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

Therefore, many participants did not view Aboriginal peoples input or involvement in this same system could be accomplished unless they were in positions on par with the Canadian governments.

**Direct Involvement by Aboriginal People**

We asked urban Aboriginal people how they viewed their participation in future policy development. The overwhelming consensus we found is that Aboriginal people must be involved in all aspects to develop and direct Aboriginal policy from the initial discussion of the area following through to implementation and evaluation of the policy.

As well, many participants declared policy for so long has been something done to Aboriginal people without their input and these policies written for Aboriginal peoples by the Canadian governments in isolation has not worked. Many did not feel that the Canadian government has responded or has ever responded effectively to the needs of the original nations of this land. Furthermore, to continue to bring Aboriginal issues to the various Government levels and departments will only continue and perpetuate a state of dependency. Participants also stated any polices written to address the daily experiences of Aboriginal peoples must be from an Indigenous perspective and frame of mind in order to truly understand who Aboriginal people are, what they have been through and what is needed to address the current situations and issues in their lives.

*I think urban Aboriginal people need to be included in developing some of these policies. Sometimes I feel they're created out of nowhere because when you have people that are social policy architects and they don't know what it's like to live as an Aboriginal person. (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).*

*The thing is we know the issues and we know how to make it better and we know what works for us, so we should really be involved throughout the whole process. (Tina Pisuktie, personal communication, March 17, 2007).*
If the policies are about urban Aboriginal peoples then who best to be involved in the making of them and the development from the very beginning. We need to be involved because Aboriginal people know what’s best for them. (Yolanda Pennell, personal communication, November 29, 2006).

It is high time that Aboriginal people pursued the issue of policy development for urban Aboriginals by Aboriginals. How can a policy be developed without their input? It’s just another policy that will never be able to be applied to Aboriginals if they don’t help develop it. (Minnie Grey, personal communication, August 11, 2006).

It was clearly expressed by many that ‘Aboriginal policy should only be written by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.’

Self-Determination
Aboriginal peoples assert the right to self-determination as a fundamental right afforded to all human beings. Aboriginal people assert this inherent right is protected at both the national and international levels. The Constitution Act (1982) s. 35. (1) recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal Peoples. As well, at the international level via the United Nations, self-determination is recognized in international law as a “universal right of all peoples.” Despite being actively involved in drafting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian government’s recent opposition to the adoption of the draft in June 2006 calls into question basic human rights afforded to Indigenous people within Canadian boundaries (see Assembly of First Nations Press Release, 2006).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples previously affirmed the struggle of Aboriginal peoples both in urban and reserve/or rural locations to have their basic human rights recognized.

Whatever their local and cultural origins, Aboriginal people living in urban centre’s share with reserve-based, rural and northern Aboriginal people the struggle to gain recognition as First Peoples, members of Canadian society who have a human right and a constitutional right to survive as peoples, wherever they choose to live (RCAP, 1992).

Aboriginal people need to be in control of their lives and livelihoods regardless of where they live. Participants viewed the creation of Aboriginal policy by Aboriginal peoples as a necessary step in taking control of their lives and in determining their futures. For example, Deana Michel expressed Aboriginal people must be recognized and treated as equals with the capability of determining solutions for Aboriginal communities.
Equality in terms of treating us like we are human beings and realizing that we have relevant ideas and valid ideas and we have the capability and capacity within our communities to come up with amazing ideas for us. I think we’re the only people that can come up with those ideas because only we know who we are and what we need. (Deana Michel, personal communication, July 26, 2006).

As well, participants also expressed the need for Aboriginal people to become the decision-makers and to determine what solutions or methods will be used within Aboriginal communities to address social urban issues.

We’re the ones they’re doing this for, they’re making decisions for us and we should be making them for ourselves. (Kristy Barnaby, personal communication, November 29, 2006).

As Tina Pisuktie in Montreal declared it is only by ‘taking control’ that Aboriginal peoples will be able to right the current situations.

I think it’s important that we take charge of our destiny, take charge of our future because there are things that are going on that are wrong. (Tina Pisuktie, personal communication, March 17, 2007).

However, other there were people, such as the following participant who tentatively viewed the increase of control coinciding with the development of capacity within Aboriginal communities.

The whole concept of self-determination, we need to take into consideration that as a governing people we have the answers and as we go, the capacity within our own communities, we can assume more responsibilities. And it’s happening all across the country. (Maengan Linklater, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

Although other participants, such as Damon Johnston explained the level of control assumed by Aboriginal communities does not require the involvement of the federal government.

We have the current government policy with respect to Aboriginal peoples is that we have an inherent right to self-government. Self-government means that - self-government. In other words you make your own decisions. So what that should mean in terms of any monies that are transferred between the federal government to First Nations or other Aboriginal communities is that’s all it should be - a transfer. Then we decide what we do with the money. That’s self-determination but right now you have a situation where it’s the bureaucrats who
control the money. And the same thing with policy, we should be making our own policy. So you know the best policy would probably be no policy created by governments for us but policies created by us for our people. (Damon Johnston, personal communication, July 24, 2006).

Participants also voiced the foundation necessary for Aboriginal policy is it must be based on Indigenous perspectives and cultural understandings.

When it concerns their livelihood like with water, when it concerns their land, when it concerns just the basics of human life that's fundamental they [Aboriginal people] have to be involved in policy in making those policies for themselves about themselves. It has to be by them. When it comes to cultural I also think they should be involved. They should be involved in all levels of their self-definition and who they are and what they do. They should take care of themselves. (Nahka Bertrand, personal communication, August 14, 2006).

For those who are developing policy, the spirituality of Indigenous peoples was deemed to be vital for ensuring cultural ways are incorporated into addressing current social situations. For example, *Nadia explains the importance of ensuring Indigenous ways of living in contemporary urban environments are based on the spiritual and cultural philosophies of Indigenous peoples.

To have the spiritual base, without a spiritual base, no matter what you do in life, people turn to spirituality. That’s all there is to it. It’s the experience of human nature from time immemorial so we need to have that spiritual base, nothing is as important as having a spiritual base, and after that I would include the cultural base, making sure they have the philosophies of native culture. (*Nadia, personal communication, January 22, 2007).

The perspectives and the cultures of Indigenous peoples are not based on the same philosophies or scientific approaches as Western thought.

They [Canadian governments] are trying to think about everything logically. Everything is somehow this mathematical equation. Everything has a concrete answer and that’s not how life works but the [Canadian] systems that are built as if it’s a science and science always has a definite answer. Life doesn’t have those definite answers! So people have to readjust their lives to the systems instead of the systems readjusting for us. (Tina Pisuktie, personal communication, March 17, 2007).
Traditional ways or laws as Aboriginal policies

In the course of doing interviews with several people, there was some confusion for us when they used the terms ‘Aboriginal policies’ and ‘our own policies’ interchangeably. We discovered they would use the term when referring to both the current Canadian government Aboriginal policies and traditional Indigenous ways of living. However, according to their understanding ‘Aboriginal policy’ referred to the ‘traditional teachings’ or the ‘traditions and protocols’ that govern Indigenous societies.

As Indigenous people our policies have never gone away and having to endure this increase in urbanization [colonization] creates huge challenges and strains on our own laws and our own policies. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

These people further explained ‘traditional Aboriginal policies’ have been overrun by the Canadian government’s version of Aboriginal policy.

There is a policy by the Canadian government to provide the transportation infrastructure for the movement of natural resources and peoples across the country. That inflicted upon our policy of being able to go out and have access to the land and fishing resources. It undermines our own way of living and our jurisdiction because that is our inherent traditional lands and yet it’s it isn’t being respected or acknowledged. A lot of our laws are embedded in our traditional language. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

The knowledge’s contained Indigenous languages were viewed to be essential in the creation of Aboriginal policy. For example, Florestine Bird discussed the importance of language in her comparison and definition of what should be “Aboriginal policy,”

Aboriginal policy in the past has been used in the past to oppress native people, for example the Residential schools to try to assimilate us and integrate us against what we would call our own Aboriginal policy. Our own policy would be learning our own language, relearning our own language because language is important. The teaching is already in the language so the philosophy you already have the philosophy if you can speak your own language; that in it would be Aboriginal policy. (Florestine Bird, personal communication, November 28, 2006. Emphasis in original).

In the development of Aboriginal policies it is important for Indigenous philosophies to create the foundation and be present throughout all aspects of the policy.
What is the basis of Aboriginal policy if it doesn’t contain Indigenous philosophy? Call it anything... call it green policy, or call it blue policy. (Rasunah Marsden, personal communication, January 26, 2007. Emphasis in original).

In the creation of Aboriginal policies, some people also spoke of the need to rely on traditional government structures and systems.

We have to supersede all those other jurisdictional creations before we can actually move forward so we have to relive or rekindle our traditional government structures and how we made our own policies coming from our point of view because we had own laws and morals. I think we have to dig deep and find out how we can work through these stages and create something that’s unique and meets our needs so we can be self determining as people. (Cyril Shorting, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

As well, in the development or creation of Aboriginal policies, Stephan Germain in Montreal, stated these should ensure the transmission of cultures as a way to contribute to Aboriginal peoples’ ability to live well within urban environments.

Urban Aboriginal policy would be any policy that can contribute to the welfare or well being of Aboriginal and also that can contribute to the transmission of the culture from generation to generation. So these would be the policies that facilitate the transmission of information from generations to generations and also help the well being of current people who are having difficulties in their lives. (Stephan Germain, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

Cindy Blackstock also presented the importance of acknowledging Indigenous cultures for the strengths and positive aspects that have sustained its peoples for so many generations and will continue to do so in the future.

Many people who know me know I’m a rebel against the whole ‘healing’ thing in Aboriginal communities. I think it positions us in a way where we’re always recovering from pain. It puts us in a position of weakness. What we need to start doing is celebrating the great strengths that have been passed down to us. That’s not to minimize the difficult things that we’ve been through. It’s to put those strengths at the centre and give a message of hope to young people; that says associating yourself with being Aboriginal, whatever that means to you – does not mean hooking yourself up to this whole piece of pain as part of your core identity. It means that you get the great gifts that have been handed down through
thousands of generations and that those strengths will position you to not only deal with these things that have happened to us, because they will affect you – but everything that’s ahead of you. (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, August 3, 2006).

To effectively deal with areas of concern in the lives of urban Aboriginal people requires a collective and collaborative effort and responsibility by both Aboriginal communities and the Canadian governments.

Policy development goes two ways because as Aboriginal or Indigenous people, we’ve been imposed with systems and that is what sort of makes us, we don’t define who we are, how we do things and that creates a lot of problems like in self image, confidence and social problems. You look at the water problem; we can’t just tell the government ‘hey do this for us.’ It has to go both ways like it also has to come from the community. You know the community has a responsible to itself and it has to recognize its responsibility and definitely it has to be involved with policy and policy making. (Nahka Bertrand, personal communication, August 14, 2006).

Furthermore, it was presented Aboriginal communities have a responsibility to ensure its members can live well within city boundaries by actively collaborating in the various decision-making positions within the larger community.

The role of Aboriginal people within an urban setting is part of an integrated model, they would serve in all sorts of strata’s in the community from leadership positions whether they’re in municipal government or other important organizations that work within a community, these people need to collaborate on having a healthy community, having a functional infrastructure that allows for people to work and play. (Leo Jacobs, personal communication, December 1, 2006).

And in the creation of Aboriginal policy, Canadian governments should support and respect the ways those processes are created.

Looking back on our traditional way of doing things, I suppose it would mean as well speaking to say either city or provincial or federal governments so that they can be there to back up our policies and make sure that they are respected. (Sue Thiebaut, personal communication, August 2, 2006).
Aboriginal Peoples
In keeping with Indigenous philosophies and languages, our identities as ‘human beings’ are not static labels but become shaped in the process of living our lives and learning the responsibility this entails in our connection to all life (see authors Keitlah 1995, and also Little Bear, 2000). Furthermore, John Borrows states Aboriginal identity,

“Is constantly undergoing renegotiation. We are traditional, modern, and postmodern people. Our values and identities are constructed and reconstructed through local, national, and sometimes international experiences” (2002: 148).

The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, aggregates all “Indians, Métis, and Inuit people” into the category of “Aboriginal people.” However this term ignores the diversity of distinct cultures of the original nations of this land. In this research project many participants reiterated the use of the term “Aboriginal” is an umbrella or a blanket term that does not differentiate their distinct cultural backgrounds and ignores their primary identities.

I believe ‘First Nations, Métis, Inuit’ are ‘Aboriginal’ but we are separated by where we come from. (Minnie Grey, personal communication, August 11, 2006).

Critique of the term Aboriginal
Not only did participants critique the term “Aboriginal,” many people were also critical of the use of this term in the title of this research project. However, CNPR was encouraged by these people to retain “Aboriginal” in the title so that in this report their critique, their voices, their objections and their identities could be acknowledged.

We have so many different names for Aboriginal people, we’re Aboriginal, we’re First Nation, we’re Indian, we’re Métis, we’re non-status, we’re you know what I mean? Who are we talking about half the time? Yet are any of those names our own? This ‘identity’ comes from legislation it doesn’t come from us. (Damon Johnston, personal communication, July 24, 2006).

*Challis explained that the use of the English language and its terminology reduces and removes the understanding of “people” or humanity within Indigenous perspectives.

In some ways, we no longer consider ourselves as human beings first and have to take back our identity! That whole thing of whether we use ‘native’ or ‘Indigenous?’ Well those are their labels. As long as we
know ourselves as “People,” a specific kind of different, and know we are different. (*Challis, personal communication, December 5, 2006).

Aboriginal peoples base their identities according to their own languages and cultural perspectives. Many people we spoke to used the name of their people when introducing themselves.

The one term that I’ve always really liked stems from when people always call themselves ‘The People’ because whenever we describe ourselves in the traditional languages it always translates to ‘The People.’ I wish we are accepted and acknowledged for being The People, capital T, capital P. (Brennan Manoakeesick, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

Critique of the term “urban Aboriginal”

Also, while conducting this research we discovered several people had grave concerns with the term ‘urban Aboriginal.’ For these people this was a new term and they were sceptical of policy development for this ‘new category’ of Aboriginal people.

I don’t know if people these days want to put urban peoples into a box, like they’re a separate group like ‘First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Urban. I don’t want I’m afraid of having almost like a fourth [category of] Aboriginal person. You are First Nation, Métis, Inuit or urban. (Jocelyn Formsma, personal communication, August 7, 2006. Emphasis in original).

Where the challenge lies is the fact that even the term ‘urban Aboriginal people’ is such a term. ‘Urban Aboriginal Peoples’ lumps together so many peoples and so many unique nations. It paints a picture that urban Aboriginal peoples are all the same from the East Coast to the West Coast, to the north and the south because each nation, even the geography of each city or urban setting is always unique to their people’s situations and their socio-economic conditions. I mean there are so many variables that by having just one term to identify all peoples it's just it's almost too much to describe everyone. It’s overly generalizing and simplifying the peoples. (Brennan Manoakeesick, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

Whether or not people agreed or disagreed with the term ‘urban Aboriginal,’ there was great sentiment expressed by many people of the necessity to be acknowledged for ‘who we are’ and not for a current place of residence. This view can also be summarized in that ‘it is in our identities and our connection to the land that defines who we are as
peoples and it is not the situation or location in which we may presently find ourselves to be.’

> When I think of who lives in the urban environment I think there are many people who are like me, who think of themselves as being Inuit or Métis or First Nations or Maori or Aborigine or Native American but where we live is in an urban setting but it’s not who we are. (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, August 3, 2006).

For example, in the following statement by Guy Lonechild who identified primarily with his ancestral affiliations was also similarly found with the majority of participants.

> I strongly identify my First Nations territory as being White Bear First Nations on reserve, if I’m not living on my reserve and I’m obviously off reserve and so I feel that is what I identify with, I don’t identify with the urban. I think I’m just ‘off reserve’ as opposed to ‘urban’ ... for me urban is not something I strongly identify with at all. As a matter of fact, it’s quite a foreign term. (Guy Lonechild, personal communication, August 27, 2006).

There were participants who indicated the terms used to describe or define the original nations are imposed and resisted in the everyday language of Indigenous people.

> We don’t always identify with the term Aboriginal or urban Aboriginal because those were not terms that we developed ourselves. Those are kind of impose upon us so I mean young people, Elders, whoever often dispute just even the term ‘urban Aboriginal.’ They say ‘I’m Indian living in the city’ or ‘Métis living in a city’ or whatever. It’s just such a difficult term to use. I don’t fully identify as being an ‘urban Aboriginal’ but now there are some compromises I guess, until we find a suitable term. (Brennan Manoakeesick, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

However, as Brennan Manoakeesick recognized these terms will continue to be used until Indigenous peoples develop more suitable or appropriate terminology.

**Urban Aboriginal People**

Over the past thirty years, the urban Aboriginal population has grown and these numbers are only expected to continue to rise in the future (RCAP, 1992). In 2001, the Canadian Census reported 976,305 people identified as Aboriginal, or 3.3% of the total population belong to one or more of the following groups: Indian, Métis or Inuit (Ministry of Industry, 2003). According to Statistics Canada, it is estimated that fifty percent of the Aboriginal population lives within Canadian urban centres.
Aboriginal Urbanization

While conducting this research, similar to the findings from Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Urban Issues (RCAP 1992) there were many reasons provided for Aboriginal people residing in urban locations.

One of the explanations for Aboriginal urbanization was provided from the following person:

_Through colonization whether you’re on the East Coast or the West Coast, we saw a new form of human settlement brought to this land we call Turtle Island, a different form of living on the land, those are the early stages of urbanization._ (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

We heard numerous other historical situations illustrating the reasons for the urban Aboriginal population as follows:

- Family members who were forced off their traditional lands, placed onto Indian reserves;
- People who were placed and afterwards released from various institutions whether those were residential schools, medical facilities, or prisons;
- The historical situations of people being omitted, disenfranchised ancestors who were not “put on the list;”
- Disenfranchised war veterans;
- Disenfranchised women who married non-Aboriginal men and the children from those marriages, despite having been reinstated with Bill C-31 have difficulty reconnecting to a home community; and,
- Those who previously chose not to identify as Aboriginal due to social and racial discrimination and are now only recently beginning to acknowledge their Aboriginal ancestry.

Some of the more current explanations for moving to cities were due to socio-economic opportunities such as services and programs not available in the home or rural communities:

- Education
- Employment
- Medical
There were some people who provided examples of those who moved to escape violence and abuses or to seek better living opportunities in the cities, due to the lack of housing, resources, and employment.

Also, marriages to non-Aboriginal people were explanations provided for relocating into the cities. Some Aboriginal people were born in the city and their families have resided in urban locations for generations. Although there was discrepancy regarding the length of time one must be in an urban location to be considered part of the urban Aboriginal community. This ranged from the initial transition, “getting off the bus” (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006) to several years to completely make the transition of living within an urban environment. However, people making the transition to urban living were viewed as needing the most assistance and services.

Research conducted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), brought forward many of the issues Aboriginal people encounter in the cities. Based on data from the numerous workshops and hearings held across the land, RCAP highlighted various issues many Aboriginal people face when residing in the urban locations:

“Aboriginal people in urban centres often face overwhelming problems that are rooted in cultural dislocation and powerlessness, discrimination and economic hardship. In workshops and plenary sessions at the round table and in hearings across the country, they spoke of their experiences, the importance of their identity, their frustrations with governments and service agencies, and their determination to exercise influence over the institutions that govern their daily lives” (1992: 3).

The findings of the RCAP can be summarized in the following:

- “the survival of Aboriginal identity in an environment that is usually indifferent and often hostile to Aboriginal cultures;
- the existing void in government policies to recognize and reinforce the goals of urban Aboriginal people;
- the need for accessible and appropriate human services; and
- difficult questions around how urban Aboriginal people can gain an effective voice in governance and decision making” (1992: 2).
Although it has been over a decade since the release of the Commission’s report on Aboriginal People, the areas of urban concerns highlighted by RCAP are still resounding in the lives of urban Aboriginal people and throughout this research project.

Several people made reference to RCAP and at times we were even questioned as to why it was necessary to conduct more research when the experiences and issues of many Aboriginal peoples living within urban locations are still in existence and well known by both Aboriginal peoples and Canadian governments.

**Urban Aboriginal Community**

Due to the diversity and distinct cultures of Indigenous people that currently reside in urban locations, there has been much discussion of the difficulty in defining and recognizing “urban Aboriginal communities” because there is “difficulties in establishing a sense of community.” (See RCAP, 1993)

Several people during the interview process, in the circles and community forum (in Vancouver) expressed “there is no sense of community” in the urban setting and there is “no coherent urban Aboriginal community.” However, previous research examining the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver presented Aboriginal perspectives regarding community based on identity, relationships and space, which differs from Canadian governmental institutional definitions of community (see T. Dorward, 2005).

In this research project, the CNPR found similar results in that people provided examples of defining the urban Aboriginal community based on identity which included: all people of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit descent; and all those who self identify as such who are currently residing in an urban setting. Many participants also acknowledged the importance of recognizing those without legal status stating, “We can’t forget people.” Furthermore, we found that people maintained relationships either through their work or personal lives as an important way to stay connected to other Aboriginal people. Some of the people we spoke to also had strong connections to their home community as a way to maintain the ties with their families and their cultures.\(^{11}\)

It was also raised that due to the mobility patterns of Indigenous peoples, from the past to the present day there does exist a large population of people moving back and forth between home communities, rural areas and to different cities.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) In this research project this finding could be due to the majority of participants were of First Nation ancestry.

\(^{12}\) This high mobility rate is also one of the reasons presented for the difficulty of obtaining accurate population statistics of Aboriginal peoples (RCAP 1992).
Aboriginal peoples since time immemorial have been very mobile people. You cannot pin us to one place and you know this country belonged to our nations at one time and all of the boundaries that are placed on us are arbitrary boundaries that have been created and defined by others who are not us as Aboriginal peoples. I know for a lot of people a lot of Aboriginal people that I know they are highly mobile. They have a home in the city, they have a home in the reserve, they have home in a rural area and they bounce back and forth. They go from a rural community to an urban community. They have friends and family who live here and whatever happens to the friends or the family happens to them because of those interconnections that they have. Whatever impacts someone in an urban environment does eventually impact somebody who lives in a rural environment because there's that relationship that's really important. (Marlyn Bennet, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

It was even presented by a couple of participants that they were ‘unsure where they might be living next week.’ However, this factor was more notable with the First Nation participants and in discussions with beneficiaries of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) due to a “10-year clause.” For example, Cree and Inuit people under this Agreement reported ‘having to go back home to the territory’ because according to this clause, if a person lives outside of the territory for a period of more than ten years, s/he is no longer eligible to receive benefits as outlined in the JBNQA. (Minnie Grey, personal communication, August 11, 2006) and (*Tom, personal communication, November 24, 2006).

The space for urban Aboriginal people was recognized in the ways to connect with one another through daily living, celebrations, and the communal events that occur within the city boundaries. Often this physical space was found within the Aboriginal organizations or cultural centre’s which provided various services and/or social gathering places. Also, people recognized the important contributions made on behalf of the urban Aboriginal community from those who worked within the Aboriginal organizations. We were able to witness through this research project, the commitment and passion many of these service providers who worked over and above their job descriptions in order to provide services in their attempt to create ‘healthy space’ for many Aboriginal people within urban locations.
Stages of Policy Development

Initial Stages
One of the interview questions pertained to the stages of policy development and when do urban Aboriginal people need to become involved. It was widely held of participants that Aboriginal people had to be involved in the very initial stages of policy development.

Rasunah Marsden explained Indigenous knowledge should not be discarded for it is the connection to the land that provides an understanding and the appropriate time to become involved in order to provide sustenance for Aboriginal people.

At no stage should they be excluded. It’s all stages, all stages. We have a contribution to make in this area. We prepare the soil; we plant the seeds; we nourish their growth; we harvest the results for all Aboriginal vested interests. Those are your stages. There are no other stages. We know about the land. (Rasunah Marsden, personal communication, January 26, 2007).

In order to address the needs of urban Aboriginal people the overwhelming majority of participants proclaimed Aboriginal people had to be involved at the earliest stage of policy development.

You can't have limited participation in policy development it has to be full or nothing because if you don't involve the Aboriginal population along the way they're not going to think of it as their own and they will reject that policy. (Darren H. Courchene, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

The initial stages were stated to include the “brainstorming session” or initial discussion of the areas Aboriginal people feel is necessary to examine, prior to any decisions or plans of actions that may have already been decided by governments.

Well, they have to be involved right from the beginning, right from the very first gathering to say I want to be involved, here are my ideas, here are my experiences. You can’t bring them in the middle because you’ve already made your decisions with what the policies and procedures are going to be. Right from the beginning, right from the birth of it they have to be involved. (Don Daynes, personal communication, December 5, 2006).

The majority of participants also stated Aboriginal peoples involvement had to continue throughout the entire process.
Right from the time there is a decision made that there’s going to be policy and policy change you need to have input right from the start until the end of the process however long it might take. You can’t just bring people on midstream they have to be involved right from day one and I think policy development has to be more community based and not government based and can’t be driven by people who haven’t been out to the communities or don’t know what is going on out there. The policy needs to be driven by communities that know what the issues are, and base their decision based on the best practices. (Vince Robillard, personal communication, November 16, 2006).

Some participants outlined the various stages from consultations, to design, research and evaluations of policy.

Every step of the way. I think that if the government, if any level of government is thinking of changing policies or implementing new policies or setting up a policy to tackle a problem that has sort of changed along the way, it is very important for Aboriginal people to be involved from the onset. I also think that Aboriginal people ought to be involved not just with being consulted but in the formation of the consulting procedures and the process that ultimately will be taken leading to a consultation and leading to actual policy setting. (Lou Demerais, personal communication, October 18, 2006).

Aboriginal people need to be involved right from the first conceptual design and right through to dissemination of any research and public policy. (Alfred James Gay, personal communications, August 4, 2006.)

In addition, it was presented the inclusion of urban Aboriginal people at the earliest developmental stage will not only assist Aboriginal people but will also serve to inform as a learning tool for non-Aboriginal Canadians the social urban concerns of Aboriginal people.

If we get involved at the earliest stage I think the general public will have a better understanding of what our needs are because of our involvement hits to the heart of the issue. (*John, personal communication, December 4, 2006).

Also there was a requirement on the part of the Canadian government to be knowledgeable of the leaders and key contacts within Aboriginal communities.
You can't implement something for people. You can't patronize our people and assume that we don't know what we need. You have to come to us. I would say as a matter of general policy you start right at the beginning. When government is even just thinking about developing policy that’s when they need to pick up the phone. (Rosalie Francis, personal communication August 17, 2006).

However, there were concerns that involvement in every topic, at every stage could become too burdensome for Aboriginal community members.

In my mind I suppose it depends on the policy. I'm tempted to say that urban Aboriginals should be consulted on every stage but I know that's not practical and I, myself, as an Aboriginal person don't want to be consulted on every stage either. I like to be informed generally about policy issues but at which stage I wanted to be engaged I would have to say the decision-making stage. If my First Nation or my zone or Native Council or Friendship Centre was or about to be asked for their input on a major policy, I think it's at that stage, as an individual, would I want to be contacted directly and given the opportunity to voice an opinion, even [to be contacted by] writing or by telephone or by invitation to a meeting. I would say, as a minimum, at the decision-making stage I would see in urban Aboriginals being engaged. (Daniel Christmas, personal communication August 21, 2006).

My first initial instinct is every step of the way but I'm wondering if that's too placing too much, is it going to be too time lengthy. (Sue Thiebaut, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

Another time period mentioned for Aboriginal people to become involved with policy development was the community should be involved when the community is able to do so.

Well when communities are healthy and have that capacity then they should step up to the plate. If the community is not ready, who’s setting the agenda? It’s not us. When? Is just when the community can respond to the needs of the community. (Harvey Michelle, personal communication, March 17, 2007).

**Policy Evaluations and Fluid Policy**

In the creation of Aboriginal policies, it was mentioned by participants that it is necessary to conduct evaluations to determine the effectiveness and to ensure Aboriginal people are also involved throughout this process.
I think it's important that every step along the way that people who are aspiring to make policy keep checking back to see if they are still on track. (Lou Demerais, personal communication, October 18, 2006).

Significantly, in the creation of ‘Aboriginal policy” a key component considered by people is that policy must be fluid and flexible, with the ability to adapt to the changing needs of the urban Aboriginal communities and people.

If the policy doesn't work, we could scratch off. The policy is not etched in stone. If it is not working then we should come to the table and make policies as living documents, you know make it grow if it's not working. (Cyril Shorting, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

The local communities need to be involved in policy evaluation by examining how relevant or effective the whole process or processes are working. We need to really look at the end result is it benefiting your community and if not, why not? They can’t be set in stone. They need to flexible so that they can be changed as time changes, as situations change and people change. You need to be responsive with the policies and not just when crisis arise but to prevent situations like that from happening in the first place. (Vince Robillard, personal communication, November 16, 2006).

Even once the policy is developed that there is a continued evaluation or review of the work that was achieved. With it being more of a ‘living document’ or a ‘living policy’ where if it doesn't work initially, the ideas may still be there but if it needs to be flushed out or there needs to be almost like a living framework. I truly believe that policy at times does in the past has let us down because policy before it is set in stone it was like you develop policy and it is implemented. However we have a much more general understanding of governance structures where there is more organic fluid processes in order to govern ourselves because it's not so much that we get caught up in the technicalities of policy, it's that we use policies to help the people to live the fullest potential of their lives as opposed to ensuring that the bare minimum is ensured for all people. I feel that policy needs to be reflective of our ever-changing society as well as the way the world's consistently changing. Policy needs to be a framework that continues to grow and change and be reflective of the world we live in. (Brennan Manoakeesick, personal communication, August 2, 2006).
Inclusive Approach

Participants were asked the question, “What would an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development entail?” For the most part, the response can be summarized as ensuring everyone who may be affected by a specific policy or interested in the area of policy development be invited to share their thoughts and to provide their input. Kahanni Fontaine raised an interesting observation when attempting to define an inclusive approach by stating:

*To ensure everyone is there. Not really sure how, but it’s funny that we have to even think about this, since traditionally everyone would be included* (Kahannie Fontaine, personal communication July 31, 2006).

For many participants, an inclusive approach to policy development requires the input of all its members, thereby securing and establishing that youth, women, Elders, and leaders alike are represented and involved throughout the whole process. Cyril Shorting from Winnipeg commented on the need to have a consensus-based model in approaching policy development by stating:

*It has to be a true consensus-based model where everybody can throw in their piece of advice or knowledge or wisdom in creating this. It could come from the Elders. It could come from youth. It could come from women, and it could come from our leadership. I think it has to include these four areas to make it work. What I see right now? Others are not given a voice. The youth are not actually given a voice even the women are neglected. So I say we have to include these people in the policy development and implementation - creating some kind of unique initiative that meets our needs to urban environment, but doesn’t diminish who we are as Indigenous people coming from certain First Nation communities or treaty territories.* (Cyril Shorting, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

For Cyril Shorting, the creation of a consensus-based model can be a unique initiative, which will take into account urban Aboriginal needs without denying their Indigenous identity.

In taken account of the needs of urban Aboriginals, participant Andrea Dykstra from Halifax further commented on the need for an inclusive approach to be holistic stating:

*In order to assist and provide an effective policy statement and an effective direction and effective work plan, you need to have all sections Aboriginal urban population represented. Like you need to talk to the women. You need to talk to parents. You need to talk to families. You need to talk to Elders and young people and young professionals and trades people – to get all those perspectives because*
otherwise you get a lopsided policy statement. If you have services that are kind of catering to women and children, then that's only a small piece of the equation. That's only one of the many things we need to focus on in order to have strong urban Aboriginal communities. So everybody, like everybody in the community, needs to be involved somehow and all of those perspectives need to be incorporated into a kind of holistic statement. So until you have all of those stakeholders at the table, it's really difficult to come up with anything that's going to have any real effectiveness on the entire community. (Andrea Dykstra, personal communication, August 18, 2006).

Identifying the need to have all urban community members involved, Andrea Dykstra acknowledged the failure to do so will result in policy development not having any real effectiveness for the urban Aboriginal community.

Many participants identified that the issues or concerns Aboriginal people have in urban areas are similar to those in rural or home communities. Furthermore, due to the mobility of Aboriginal people, an inclusive approach in policy development should be open to all Aboriginal people regardless of current residence. Marlyn Bennet acknowledges the importance of including all sectors of Aboriginal society by commenting:

I think that anyone who's interested in that particular issue or any policy issue should be involved. Again I'm going at it from a really broad expansive approach – inclusive actually – because again the division of ‘Us and Them.’ It's a ‘Rural or Urban’ thing, you know. When really mobility for Aboriginal people is very high and to, you know, just pin us to one area only is the same as freezing our culture in time. Because a lot of people think that Aboriginal culture is really dead and that what we have now is based on something that once was alive. And yet it is still alive! It's the same thing with who should be involved, whether you live in an urban environment or if you live in a rural environment. (Marlyn Bennet, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

Marlyn Bennet felt limiting Aboriginal participation according to urban or rural residence failed to take into account the mobility of Aboriginal people. In essence, the division of Aboriginal people between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ is tantamount to freezing Aboriginal culture in time by failing to acknowledge the connection which exist between the two.
When referring to the creation of a new geographical category, it was noted that Aboriginal policy impacts people regardless of where they currently reside. Cindy Blackstock in Ottawa commented on the need for an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development to simply be developed by those impacted by it, stating:

*Policy should be developed by those for whom the policy impacts...period. We need to stop using these demarcation lines as if they’re real – they’re not real for the average citizen. If we really are serious about wanting our policies to benefit those people in their daily lives, then we need to embrace their reality no matter how complex it makes our job.* (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, August 3, 2006).

There were some participants who did not want to be consulted solely on matters relevant to urban Aboriginal peoples, acknowledging the need to be informed on all relevant Aboriginal issues, whether urban or not. For example, Jocelyn Formsma spoke to the importance of an inclusive approach advocating on behalf of all voices regardless of residence by stating:

*I don't want to be only consulted on urban issues. I wouldn't want urban people to only be asked for specific urban issues, you know, because I think that’s putting them into a box. Because there’s a lot of students who come to the cities, but are still very much a part of their own communities back home. But because they are not living there anymore, they are not considered. Like they are considered urban, but then they lose out on having a voice on the issues that are going on in their own communities.* (Jocelyn Formsma, personal communication, August 7, 2006).

**Grassroots/ local level**
The majority of participants from all seven cities acknowledged that an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development must begin at the grassroots and local level. At this level, people live, connect with one another, understand and know what social issues urban Aboriginal people are facing. The process of policy development must be open and inclusive of all people who are interested in participating. In Winnipeg, Charles Cochrane spoke about the need to involve grassroots community people at all times by commenting:

*I think you need to involve the community... these are the people that are the grassroots people that see the everyday issues, that live the everyday issues or that have to service the people on those everyday
Many participants identified the need for policy development to begin at the local levels because of the differences that exist between each community.

**Elders**
A significant number of participants identified the importance of Elders in an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Janice Henry in Prince Albert acknowledged the value of Elders by stating:

> Elders and ageism is a really big issue, and you know, we do focus on, unfortunately or fortunately as people, we do focus on the youth because they are the future of our people. But it’s very important also that we focus on the value of our Elders and the great contribution that they have to make. (Janice Henry, personal communication, August 24, 2006).

In Prince Albert, Miranda Henderson also commented on the need to further engage Elders by stating:

> Well Elders should be addressed first. Elders should be addressed more on issues concerning communities and in urban areas because they're the ones who tend not to be heard – not to be heard at all or even taken seriously. If you have an Elder who can give you so much more knowledge, listen to them and take their advice because that's what they should be doing anyway. Where nowadays you only see maybe one Elder on a board, when there should be six of them – not just one or two. (Miranda Henderson, personal communication, August 25, 2006).

Stan Williams advocated for a much more inclusive approach to Elders participation, rather than simply offering the opening or closing prayer, in the following comment:

> There's a huge wealth of information and successes from our Elders. They need to be included in these decision-making processes, not just by giving us an opening prayer or closing. They need to be involved, you know, and their words – words of advice – need to be acknowledged and integrated within those processes. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).
A participant further acknowledged that Elders should play a key role in legitimating the processes of urban Aboriginal development by stating:

*You need to find Elders, who can sit on a committee in whatever capacity, who have those philosophies of looking forward to the next seven generations, and who work in native communities. Have your policy stamp of approval by them! So there’s legitimacy within your work and once there’s legitimacy, there will be acceptance amongst the people it’s affecting.* (*Nadia, personal communication, January 22, 2007*).

In order to have an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development, Elders must be fully engaged in the process. Elders must not only be participants, but must have a key role in further legitimating the processes.

**Family**

Many participants acknowledged the role of family in an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Stephan Germain in Montreal acknowledged, “it’s important for families, as much as individuals, to get involved” (personal communication, November 23, 2006). Lyle Oliver in Vancouver also commented,

*Everybody – the whole family – has to be involved. The whole community. And you know, it’s a circle idea that we need to start at the community level of understanding.* (Lyle Oliver, personal communication, October 19, 2006).

One of the Elderly participants emphasized that family must be included in the development of urban Aboriginal policy, which in turn must create healthier family circles. Stuart Amyotte in Prince Albert stated:

*The family circle you know, a healthy family circle! So I think that’s where we have to start by looking at [creating] healthier family circles. And to be able to teach our young people - our young ones – our children - our grandchildren - to all those that are going to benefit from all of this. Those are the ones that we have to look out for! [We have to] be able to keep something for them. If we don’t, you know, they’re going to be in worse shape than we are, you know? So it has to be done in a way where everyone is involved and everybody has a say in it – not just individuals but families.* (Stuart Amyotte, personal communication, August 24, 2006).
In Ottawa, Cindy Blackstock acknowledged the key role of family in attaining self-determination by recalling the following:

> When we brought 200 folks together and we asked: “what are the principles of working respectfully in a system that would better support Aboriginal children?” And in this case – and they were very simple – what communities have been saying for many, many years – so none of this innovative - self-determination is the respective Aboriginal families...to make the best decisions for their children. (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, Aug 3, 2006).

**Women**

When asked about an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development, participants acknowledge the role of women, particularly addressing women’s involvement in decision-making processes. Stan Williams in Vancouver discussed the exclusion of women in many Aboriginal political structures that are currently in place. He argued that women must be included in the decision-making processes because:

> That doesn't work in many communities and in my community, in my tradition, women are the essential decision-makers in the communities – that is the foundation. I think over time that's been eroded, and it's been strategically eroded, to create dysfunction in our communities. I think we need leaders that can overcome and change that reality, you know, and reset the paradigm to really incorporate our mothers and are aunties and our sisters in the decision-making processes. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

Similarly, many others expressed that need for those people being affected by the policy to be involved directly in the development of the policy. For instance, Lee Thomas in Halifax reflected upon the importance of women in the role of family by stating:

> That depends on what the policies are, but obviously things involving families – should be families, should be moms. We actually have quite a few dads that come to the Centre, but easily 95% – I hesitate to throw a statistic out – but 95% of the people that come here are moms. So I think moms – women – need a big say in these things today, and kids too. (Lee Thomas, personal communication, November 29, 2006).

Another participant also acknowledges the importance of seeking out our most vulnerable women and seeing how they are interested in being included by commenting:
Why I think everyone who can be, should be involved, I think we need to talk to service providers. We need to talk to organizations. We need to talk to support groups. We need to talk to people that are often neglected, left out of this. For example, like going to a women’s shelter. These women are really vulnerable and just asking them questions as to where did we fail and where can we include women. (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

Youth
Similarly to Elders and women, youth were also discussed in what constitutes an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Participants acknowledged the importance of having a youth voice to assist in the development of urban Aboriginal policy. Claudet Michell, a self-identified youth, in Winnipeg said:

I think it's important for myself and young people to be able to have a say on issues, such as this. I think it's important that our voices be heard. We are going to be the ones that are going to be the future – the future leaders for our people – and we have to know that the government is willing to listen to us and what it is that we are proposing. There are a lot of good young people here with strong ideas and we have to be there – have that voice, too. We have to be able to say things that we feel should be done for our people. (personal communication, July 30, 2006).

Stephan Germain, in Montreal, further commented on the need to anyone involved by likening involvement to following:

It can be the youngest teenager, who has had an experience and would like to share that experience with other people that develop policy. So this person can be involved. Even though he’s a young teenager, he can bring information and help out with the structuring of the policy to involve or act upon. (personal communication, November 23, 2006).

Many participants also acknowledged the necessity of youth having a voice. An inclusive approach must be extended to youth, who are often overlooked or not included in the process. Janet Carrier suggested that:

When they’re dealing with youth, the youth that are picked to be involved in a lot of things are not the youth that really need the help. They are usually excluded because the rest of the community frowns them upon. (Janet Carrier, personal communication, August 24, 2006).
Waneek Horn-Miller in Montreal also concluded that youth currently involved like post-secondary educated youth, are not necessarily reflecting the voice of those in need by commenting:

*You need to have youth, and youth being not just the youth you find in university but the youth that are living on the streets and every [youth]. You have such a wide range of voices – they need to be heard.*

*(Waneek Horn-Miller, personal communication, November 23, 2006).*

Overall, participants felt strongly that youth voice was a necessary aspect of an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Furthermore, all youth needed to be included, regardless of their age, maturity, social status, education, and life experiences.

**Aboriginal Organizations and Service Providers**

In addition to Elders, women, families and youth, participants also identified Aboriginal organizations and service providers as a key aspect of an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Participants viewed the urban Aboriginal organizations and service providers to be knowledgeable of urban Aboriginal issues due to their daily experiences. Claudett Michell in Winnipeg argued for Aboriginal organization workers to be involved, calling for the creation of a national organization, by stating:

*We need to get the people that are working in these organizations. They are the ones that are aware of these situations. So maybe somehow getting them involved in a larger kind of national organization like across Canada. It’s important that they have a say because they know they know what the community needs. They know what the community is faced with. So it’s really important. I believe that they’d be involved in developing policy because they are the ones that know it. They’re the ones that live it. They’re the ones that are hands on and they see it every day when they are working with the urban Aboriginal community.* *(Claudett Michell, personal communication, July 30, 2006).*

Minnie Grey in Montreal also acknowledged the importance of Aboriginal organization participation by commenting:

*I think the organizations are important because, you know, when you’re an urban Aboriginal, you are not always in a position to be able to go and give your input, unless you’re invited to do so. So I think it’s very important and necessary for established organizations – Aboriginal organizations – to be involved.* *(Minnie Grey, personal communication, August 11, 2006).*
A number of participants identified the need for established Aboriginal organizations to be involved, as they already have policies and procedures which make them accountable to the people. At the same time, participants also acknowledged that Aboriginal organizations continue to be underfunded and as a result, are often understaffed.

In an area such as policy development, many participants did not consider urban Aboriginal policy development to be a beneficial use of time when Aboriginal organizations are supporting people in desperate need of assistance. For example, Lee Thomas and Yolanda Pennel, who both work with Aboriginal families and young children in Halifax stated,

_We have been asked to sit on dozens of boards. If we did that, then all of our programs, there’d be nobody to run them. We would have no staff. We don’t have time to get involved. Who’s going to do my job?_ (Lee Thomas, personal communication, November 29, 2006).

In addition, many people expressed that their previous involvement of policy development required a substantial time commitment in order to attend meetings, put forward concerns and recommendations. However, this input did not create desired results for them, which lead to dissatisfaction and disappointment with the process of policy development. Jane Carriere in Prince Albert explains:

_I find our community is very good at forming groups and committees to deal with problems, but I also feel that they [government representatives] already have an outcome. They know their goal already before we sit down at the table. You’ll find a lot of frontline people in our community find it very frustrating. As a front line worker, your time is precious. You’re usually juggling your time as it is. To go and spend half the day sitting at a table discussing issues that are never going to be acted upon, is very frustrating. And I find that a lot of people that really care have just chosen to not be involved anymore because they feel it’s a waste of time. It’s frustrating. It’s very frustrating._ (Janet Carriere, personal communication, August 24, 2006).

Charles Cochrane in Winnipeg also shared in the frustration by commenting:

_I’ve been employed or worked for, whether its First Nations authorities – both at the tribal council level and a regional level through AMC (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs) – and certainly, we are there as technicians to determine, to assist in the development of Aboriginal_
policy. Sometimes it gets kind of frustrating because regardless of what we developed as technicians on policy, policy strategies and developments, it’s not being heard – whether it’s where it needs to be implemented or where it comes down to at the governmental levels, federally or provincially. It sometimes gets frustrating because often we’re not getting heard and too often, our policies or recommendations for changes are basically overlooked. (Charles Cochrane, personal communication, August 1, 2006).

There obviously is a need for Aboriginal organizations to be involved. However, the time, efforts and resources are often not available. Furthermore, an expression of frustration was expressed numerous times when participants did actively participate and suggest policies and recommendations, which were not considered in the end.

**Friendship Centre’s**

Across the country, participants identified local Friendship Centre’s as the primary organization in urban centres to be involved in policy development. Friendships Centre’s should be consulted in the development of an inclusive approach regarding Aboriginal policy. In the process, Friendship Centre could gather information from community members regarding urban issues, as well as provide information to community members regarding relevant and applicable policies.

For instance, Ida laBillois-Montour in Montreal proclaimed:

>I’ve seen Friendship Centre’s at the national level and I think they’re the best voice. They are the best voice for the urban Aboriginal community at this point and I think they should be recognized as such. (Ida laBillois-Montour, personal communication, November 26, 2006).

Tina Pisuktie in Montreal also acknowledged the history of Friendship Centre’s to ground their significance in participating by stating:

>The best developments – the best movements – have always started at a grassroots level. The Native Friendship Centre’s started with one centre and then, they started popping up everywhere else. Then they decided they needed provincial associations, and a national association. So now the Friendship Centre’s do have a national association – this is something that started at a grassroots level! The Friendship Centre’s have been able to change a lot of things. (Tina Pisuktie, personal communication, March 17, 2007).
Across the board, Friendship Centre’s were seen on a local, as well as a national level, as a place where policy consultations, workshops and so on could be implemented.

**National level**

Some, due to the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, viewed the development of policy at the national level for Aboriginal people skeptically. For instance, one participant mentioned:

> I think it’s hard for policy to be developed at a national level because our regions are so different. (*Charlie, personal communication, August 22, 2006).

Yet many participants stated that National Aboriginal organizations should be involved in an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. National Aboriginal organizations are deemed to be accountable to the people they claim to represent. Other participants discussed the need to support current policy development processes already in place, while others identified the need to create a system to address policy development at a national level that will provide direction and coordinate collaborative approaches at the local level.

Jocelyn Formsma in Ottawa identified the following:

> With the support maybe we would need a national, regional, and local structures. I think there should be some kind of a national...if it's a committee, I wouldn't want it to be an organization because that might be an extra level of bureaucracy but at least something that would be able to monitor what is going on at the local level that would be able to bridge some of the issues or how some of the issues are being tackle in different communities and would be able to provide support or expertise to assist. (Jocelyn Formsma, personal communication, August 7, 2006).

**Aboriginal Leadership**

Aboriginal leadership was identified as an integral element to an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development. Many participants discussed the need for chiefs and councils from the local Aboriginal communities and/or leaders from national organizations to provide leadership in addressing policy concerns. It was also noted that Aboriginal leaders be connected to the community and to listen to community members in order to bring forward their concerns. Ed Tanner in Winnipeg provided the following comment:
We need our leadership – our leadership from our Aboriginal community – to provide the forum and to help and to direct some of the other people that need to be included in this (Ed Tanner, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

Deana Michel spoke specifically about the need for Aboriginal leaders to listen to the voice of the community in her comment:

When I think of urban Aboriginal peoples, we do have leaders that do speak for us, but I believe those leaders also need to listen to the community. And they need to be connected with the community because otherwise they are not listening to the actual voice of the community. They are actually taking control and then dictating what we need, when in fact even now they are not connected enough to the community to know what the actual issues are – what people really need. So I think, it needs to come from the community and then, the leaders need to go and negotiate, or whatever needs to be done, in the process. (Deana Michel, personal communication, July 26, 2006).

Jeffrey Copenace in Ottawa identified the need for Aboriginal leaders to focus on community needs, rather than politics, in his comment:

I think that there is a real significant need for Aboriginal leaders and policy experts to try to pull the real political aspects of these debates out of the equation. They need to really focus on the needs of the Aboriginal community members, who are in the urban centre’s, to find ways to enable them whether it be through education or whatever means necessary. (Jeffrey Copenace, personal communication, August 9, 2006.)

It was found to be important that Aboriginal leadership from the local to the national levels be involved in policy development on behalf of the people they represent, as expressed by many of the people involved in this research. For instance, Margo Vermillion in Fort McMurray stated:

I really believe it needs to be the leaders that we have selected and voted in at our local level. It needs to be people that we voted in, like the AFN Grand Chief at the national level. They’re the people we elected in and they need to listen and hear what the grassroots people are saying. They’re supposed to be sitting there to make a difference. (Margo Vermillion, personal communication, December 4, 2006)
Partnerships with mainstream Canadians
As part of an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development, partnerships with mainstream Canadians were also identified. Aboriginal peoples need to work with and alongside municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments. Stan Williams in Vancouver spoke to the need to work in partnership by stating:

> What we’re asking for is to work in partnership on developing sustainable long-term governance structures and policies where jurisdiction will lay within Aboriginal peoples’ control, in terms of determining our own communities past and aspirations for futures. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

Stephan Germain in Montreal also addressed the need to be inclusive of others in his comment:

> Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, we are all part of Canada and it’s only our goal to make the people of Canada better off. I think anybody can participate and everybody should at least understand this, because it is part of our culture [to be inclusive and include other people]. It can also include immigrants, who come to Canada and would like to understand more about the culture. They could learn about dilemmas some people might have, and maybe also, want to travel around Canada and understand northern communities and the problems they have to face in integrating their youth in urban areas. I think anybody can really help with ideas and with experiences (Stephan Germain, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

Jaimie Isaac in Winnipeg also discussed inclusivity of other Canadians when she stated:

> Not just Aboriginal people need to [be involved] because I think it’s really enlightening for everybody to hear what kind of issues are going on. I mean it is Canada; it’s all our home. It would be beneficial for people interested in that to be involved too. And not just exclusively Aboriginal people, because I don’t think that can actually get you anywhere that way because it just remains in your community (Jaimie Isaac, personal communication, August 2, 2006).

Policy Boards or Councils on policy development
In considering an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development, a number of participants identified the need for policy boards or councils. Brian Fayant in Fort McMurray identified the creation of a policy board in his comment:
Well it would be a method where we could have our own people represent and take issues forward and have a huge think tank somewhere, say in Ottawa. Have this group of people that can assess and analyze all of the policy issues and the legislation at all levels and to bring it back to the community. And to determine how those kinds of issues affect us, and maybe how we could have some input on that. I think it would be interesting to have our own community members discuss the various issues that are keeping us from moving forward. Why is it that we are still moving so slowly? (Brian Fayant, personal communication, December 4, 2006).

In Winnipeg, Ed Tanner also identified the need for Aboriginal people to be involved in the decision-making stage through a working group or board by stating:

I believe that Aboriginal people should be involved at the decision-making stage, even if we set up some kind of working group or board or smaller group to be in the end prior to the implementation. I think that's also very important for Aboriginal people to be involved. Sometimes I believe that maybe as a group that needs to be involved in this work and [there are] several types [of people], we can have some Aboriginal executive directors, some researchers, some community-based people, grassroots people and have them all working together, sharing ideas and brainstorming. It would also be good to have an Elder and the youth group even involved in some of this, because I know the youth group is very important in some of these policy areas because much of this policy would be affecting them greater later on in their life. (Ed Tanner, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

Another participant, Cecile Buesseker in Fort McMurray discussed how an Aboriginal policy board should approach policy development by stating:

First you have to have meetings and you have to see who wants to be part of the procedure of a policy and then as a group, you form what you feel is detrimental and what would be best influencing the Aboriginal community – urban Aboriginal communities. From there, you work on it, a huge capacity, but narrowing it down. I think it needs to be done collectively and then you work on that. And then you get a leader from each urban community and then you work together and then you work on the broader spectrum of the policies. (Cecile Buesseker, personal communication, December 4, 2006).
In addressing the topic of Aboriginal policy boards, participants identified that those people who sit on policy boards should be open and inclusive to all Aboriginal people, including those living on the reserve. Cindy Blackstock shared her view of the need to be inclusive of Aboriginal people in the process, regardless of where they live:

One of the first things is that I would like to actually see a table where some of the people on reserve are there as part of the key participants. [This is important regarding Aboriginal people’s place of residence.] Then it becomes “how do we meet the needs of Aboriginal people no matter where they choose to live?” That should be the guiding principle at those tables! It should not be how are we just going to meet the needs of urban people because if we do that, we are missing out on the entire thing. We missed the entire boat. We have to look at how do we develop a policy that allows people to live in dignity with the same right of freedom of movement that other Canadians enjoy. And how do we ensure this as much as possible that these services are culturally based, that the community – the person – has freedom of dignity in making their own choices? And in the community, the power to help service the needs of their community members? (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, August 3, 2006).

Participants identified the need to create a resource centre on policy that is open and easily accessible to all. *Challis also mentioned the need for a process to be bound by ethics in her comment:

There needs to be a process where they follow ethics and all of that needs to be conducted and archived. And a research centre and how this has developed over time for any kind of policy changes and workshops and development in that area. (*Challis, personal communication, December 5, 2006).

Margo Vermillion also identified the need to have a resource place that urban Aboriginal people can find this information, highlighting the struggles urban Aboriginal people face in simply trying to access information:

We’re here trying to survive, trying to fit into mainstream society, but struggling with all those barriers of the urban life. So here I think it needs to happen by having people that work in that area to ensure, whether or not, they have an office here or something, where people can go to a central place, to be able to share that information, and to be able to hear new information. A lot of times if you don’t have internet, or not sitting listening to the news, a lot of information flies
by and you have no knowledge. I think something needs to happen in setting up urban offices [regarding policy]. (Margo Vermillion, personal communication December 4, 2006).

While not having access to media might be an issue. The use of media and technology in order to reach a wide range of people, especially the younger generation was discussed. Jocelyn Formsma in Ottawa identified the use of Internet as a tool for connection in her comment:

> I would say probably a lot of people in urban settings have access to the Internet, whether it be through a library or through school or local Friendship Centre’s, or in other urban organizations like employment centre’s. I think a lot of capacity could be developed to utilize the Internet, as a way to keep in touch and to survey. I know personally it would be a really easy way for me to have input, if I could go to a website and I can see what's going on. They could send me e-mail updates on what's going on in a newsletter or something. Then when we're talking about the surveys – five-minute surveys - answers these types of questions. I think that capacity would be beneficial. (Jocelyn Formsma, personal communication, August 7, 2006).

In terms of the use of media such as the Internet, one participant identified the need to be aware of literacy levels and to be sure to include all literacy levels. Waneek Horn-Miller in Montreal shared her view:

> You have to hit all the media, you have the Internet people, and you’re going to have the people, who don’t read or write. It has to be visible. It has to be consistent. Obviously you may not get people to come the first time or second time, but you will if it becomes a consistent thing. One thing is follow up with tangible results. They need to see it, even if it’s a small thing. I don’t know how you would measure that, but if they can see some sort of progress forward that’s really important in their participation in whatever they’re doing, (Waneek Horn-Miller, personal communication, November 23, 2006).
Capacity for involvement in Policy Development
In order for the urban Aboriginal community and its members to become involved in policy development we asked people what capacity is necessary to effectively participate? In response to this question, we found a wide array of answers regarding capacity. There were some participants who focused on the financial aspect at both the organizational and individual level. There were people who presented the need for more training programs/workshops, which focused on understanding the policy process in a language that is accessible by all people who are interested in learning. Whereas, there were other participants who stated there are Aboriginal people who are already trained in the area and it would be beneficial to have these people involved in developing Aboriginal policy. As well, some participants mentioned the necessity of building relationships with non-Aboriginal people in all levels of government. And lastly, others expressed the necessity for Aboriginal peoples to unite and to working collectively to achieve self-determination.

Financial Capacity & Organizational level
As many urban Aboriginal organizations and service providing agencies are often funded on a year-to-year or project basis, uncertainty in long-term continuation depends upon the financial resources and capacity. Charles Cochrane shared in the following statement; the lack of resources or limited financial resources makes it difficult to bring Aboriginal people together to address ways of developing Aboriginal policy.

Finance, financing, and financing. The capacity for bringing people together as necessary and that's not easy. If there were ways we could bring people in together more often I think it would be much easier and quicker to develop urban Aboriginal policy. When there are very limited resources or no resources it's not easy to bring people together. I think that's basically a key area. We need to develop capacity. (Charles Cochrane, personal communication, August 1, 2006).

Charles Cochrane presented the need to develop capacity as a key component to ensure Aboriginal people are able to come together to develop Aboriginal policy.

In her example of a specific approach that has been developed in Nova Scotia, Rosalie Francis stressed not only the importance of the Canadian governments’ commitment to continue to fund initiatives that have been developed but to also continue to utilize these processes within Aboriginal communities.
I think the other capacity necessary is to make sure that government continues to support initiatives like the Tripartite Forum. They have to continue to do that because that's a very inclusive approach. And then ensure that everybody's involved and urban issues here [in Halifax] that are going to hit the table will always come to that Forum first. So that's where you got to make sure that government doesn't back down on their commitment there. (Rosalie Francis, personal communication, August 17, 2006).

Furthermore, the financial resource to ensure Aboriginal people at the organizational levels are involved in the development of Aboriginal policy has to continue throughout the whole process - to the implementation of the policy. As Maeengan Linklater indicated:

I think it should be recognized that in terms of any type of public policy development or implementation that the capacity needs to be there to support the sustainability of the implementation. So essentially making sure that it can work. There's no sense in assuming responsibility if you're not going to get the adequate support for that. (Maeengan Linklater, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

**Individual level**

In addition, participants to ensure people from the community level are able to attend policy meetings also mentioned financial capacity at the individual level. Ed Tanner mentioned for individuals, financial capacity may be required to provide transportation and daycare costs for those interested in attending meetings.

Some people at the grassroots level may need babysitters - they may not even have money to cover babysitters or transit fares or things like that. (Ed Tanner, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

Ultimately, in strengthening capacity at the individual level will overall benefit the community, as presented by Janice Henry:

In order to build capacity - we have to start at the individual level. The lack of access to resources basically stems from poverty so that has prohibited people becoming more proactively involved. We strengthen individual capacity and that ultimately strengthens community capacity - so we have to start with the Aboriginal individual and move progressively forward. (Janice Henry, personal communication, August 24, 2006).
Human Resource Capacity

There were participants who indicated there are Aboriginal people who are already trained and are able to work in all of the areas of Aboriginal policy development. Rosalie Francis referring to people who are trained or educated will contribute to the ability of Aboriginal people to represent the needs of other Aboriginal people in a good way.

*The capacity on our side of course we need our educated First Nation’s people at the table and we need to embrace them and bring them on board and not necessarily go to old-school ways of non-Aboriginal people always representing us. We have our capacity and we need to bring the people to the table and they will represent our people in a good way.* (Rosalie Frances, personal communication, August 17, 2006).

As people had previously stated in this research Aboriginal people and communities need to take control, to determine the areas and the ways the local community wishes to address these areas. Furthermore, it was also mentioned Aboriginal people also need to take control of the research and assessments conducted within the community on the areas the community wished to see addressed. Trudy Lavallee stated it is a concern that the reports are not Aboriginal owned, but she felt it was more important to participate to ensure areas of concern were addressed.

*The reports that are coming out are not Aboriginal or First Nations owned. They’re usually either through a non-Aboriginal consultant company or something so that was one of the concerns we had but we did participate in it just because we wanted to make sure that certain issues were addressed.* (Trudy Lavallee, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

Other people presented that it should be Aboriginal people within the Aboriginal community doing the research.

*But within the capacity they need to hire Aboriginal people to do that, because sometimes it’s a lot easier for an Aboriginal person to go into somebody’s home or into a community and to talk to them, not that other people aren’t capable, it just would be easier.* (Lyle Oliver, personal communication, October 19, 2006).

Deana Michel in Vancouver stated the necessary capacity required to work on social urban issues and policy development is basically dedication and commitment to the community.
Education, awareness, understanding, dedication, sacrifice and community - it needs to come from good intentions. There needs to be a real dedication to your community and I think when that is there I everything comes easier. In terms of capacity- people are more determined to have things done if the intentions are good and it is for the community. (Deana Michel, personal communication, July 26, 2006).

Although Matthew Garrow agreed the determination of dedicated people is all that is necessary to work for the interim, however long-term solutions of building capacity requires emphasis on education.

I think capacity short-term is anybody who wants to participate in the process. That’s all the capacity you need – it’s just dedicated people who want to be there and get something done. Long-term - if you want to increase the sustainability of the communities, a way to put more emphasis on education, I think that the better more invigorating ideas that can more broadly and effectively help our people. (Matthew Garrow, personal communication, August 9, 2006).

In regard to capacity and development, there were other people who presented it is necessary to provide support at the individual level not only in education, but also in all areas of Aboriginal peoples’ lives. Charles Cochrane stated by doing so today creates the future leaders:

Sometimes I believe we need to develop our people. We need to develop them whether it is spiritually, educationally, or socially and by doing so we’d be developing our own future leaders. By doing that, you know, we create people that will know how to work this policy and how to influence or develop policy for our people. (Charles Cochrane, personal communication, August 1, 2006).

Cyril Shorting also focused on the holistic perspective of developing capacity in all areas of Aboriginal peoples’ lives in order to develop and strengthen specific Strategies, such as the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and the First Nation Strategy:

I think we have to build education capacity, family capacity and social capacity, cultural capacities, spiritual capacity, a lot of capacities we have to develop and implement and enact on for both areas to work, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and First Nation Strategy, the transition [or process] should work both ways like a circle you can’t just go one way otherwise it won’t work. (Cyril Shorting, personal communication, August 2, 2006).
Cyril Shorting presents that the development of a specific strategy without the development of the people necessary to work within it will not achieve the desired results.

**Personal Experiences**
There were also many participants that stated the direct experiences of people should be considered in the creation of Aboriginal policy. Don Daynes stated direct and personal experiences of people provide the knowledge required to build the foundations of policies.

> I believe that the capacity is the person on the street who lives it and comes in and says ‘This is my life.’ If you have enough people doing that - that is where you build your policies and procedures from. [By looking at] these are the experiences - this is what needs to be changed and this is how we change it. I think involvement should be from people who are wise enough to take their experiences - their life and put it into something that is practical for others to be able to use. Not to say ‘this is what you need’ or ‘this is what we’re going to give you’ or ‘the way it should be’ - but the wisdom of experience saying these are all of the circumstances. How can we change them? Do you want to change them, and if you do how do we go about it? (Don Daynes, personal communication, December 5, 2006).

**Policy Workshops for Aboriginal People**
There were many participants who indicated the need for policy training or workshops for Aboriginal people to have a thorough understanding and working knowledge of the process of policy development and to have the training open to all who wish to participate. However, many people stated the financial resources are necessary for policy workshops to occur. Ashley Julian in her statement added a reminder to ensure there is a group of committed people that are willing to keep it going:

> Well a good thing would be financial resources and then from there to hold training programs that will keep continuously training people. You don’t want to focus on a group that is not going to keep something going. [So always having people coming in and adding to it.] (Ashley Julian, personal communication, November 28, 2006).

Ed Tanner emphasized the need for training programs to begin helping people to understand the policy process.
For urban Aboriginal people to participate in policy development many of the Aboriginal people or the community has to have some kind of educational understanding of the policy process and development and how policy affects them. They need some training, some experience and sometimes this training or experience could be one or two meetings and you'll start to learn more and more of what's going on. (Ed Tanner, personal communication, July 31, 2006).

There were other participants who provided more detailed overview of the types of training programs or workshops or forums they wanted to see in the area of policy. These people expressed the need for policy training programs/forums to provide educational background to explain the histories and the aim of specific policies. For example, Donna Gauvin in Halifax stated whether the facilitators are Aboriginal or Canadian government representatives, would provide useful knowledge for more people to learn about policy.

It would be helpful for people that have experience with it to share that vision and to have policy people or representative from like Health Canada and Indian Affairs have an open dialogue and to be able to ask [them] questions like 'how is this policy developed?' and 'why is this policy this way?' (Donna Gauvin, personal communication, August 18, 2006).

Tina Pisuktie in Montreal believed that these workshops should outline the process, various stages and enable people to understand how those who are developing Aboriginal policy will use their input.

I think there has to be workshops done so that people understand the process, so people understand where their input is going, how their input will be used, how it will make a difference. (Tina Pisuktie, personal communication, March 17, 2007).

Language
There were participants who expressed the language often used in policy is difficult. We were informed using the term policy in the title of this report could have prevented people from participating in the research. As Waneek Horn-Miller suggested an alternative name may have generated more interest from urban Aboriginal community members.
You might not want to call it ‘Urban Aboriginal policy development strategy; you might want to change the name. It could be ‘community working group on family development.’ You know getting a bunch of families together, heads of families and sitting around and asking them ‘what do you really want your kids to have here in the urban?’ ‘How long have you been here?’ and so on. (Waneek Horn-Miller, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

Many people declared that it is necessary for Aboriginal policy to be written and spoken in a dialogue that is open and at a level that allows all who wish to participate if they so choose.

For Aboriginal people when you hear the word ‘policy development’ it’s kind of like ‘Whoa! That’s a big word!’ And you know we’ve never been involved and why should we be involved in it? It needs to be presented in a very friendly kind of way. (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

People expressed the need for policy training programs to assist in the language translation and the translation of technical terms to make it accessible to a wider audience. However, it was also noted that information sharing could go both ways; first, by informing people who are affected by policy and secondly, to inform those who develop policy what the issues and concerns are spoken in the words of the people who live it.

At an individual level you do have to educate the people and in the issues you can’t just go there, you have to educate the target group you’re going to be going to and asking for their input and saying okay here are the terms we’re talking about, can you give us your definition of what they are. Sure, you have to do like a double education where you’re educating the people and they are educating you on their perspective on it. (Darren H. Courchene, personal communication, July 28, 2006).

Andrea Dysktra in Halifax mentioned the language barrier for Aboriginal people with English as a second language, or for people who are not formally trained in the Western educational system.

To have people who can articulate to those who don’t have a formal education and can put it in simple terms like ‘we just we want to know what’s important to you.’ A simple statement like that. To have people on the federal government side with that capacity to be able to boil down a complex policy approach into very simple statement. I think that’s a capacity that’s important to have because not a lot of people
can really simplify something into terms that everybody can understand. (Andrea Dykstra, personal communication, August 18, 2006).

*Jane, and other people, also agreed that the terminology of policy used in the English language becomes a barrier.

_I think another part of that is really it’s the literacy of policy development what words we use in engaging people that for example English might not be their first language or they might not feel confident in using the English language._ (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

Jane went on further to state when looking at the words used when discussing policy “it is important to create an atmosphere where people’s voices are heard. We need to empower Aboriginal people and show them that they do have a voice they are important.” (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

**English and French Languages**
The one area we had great difficulty with language barriers was in Montreal, and we were informed by people that language was seen as a divisive area.

_Language is always the problem. If we could have a forum where both languages, both cultures, and I’m talking about the francophone Aboriginal culture and the Anglophone Aboriginal culture [can] come together to meet and discuss openly how we could best work together._ (Ida Billois-Montour, personal communication, November 26, 2006).

Therefore, it would be best for the urban Aboriginal people at the local levels to determine the best approach that would work for all the people within the community, whether the approach of developing Aboriginal policy is through a combination of the English, French and Indigenous languages.

**Building Relationships**
There were participants who spoke of the need to work with non-Aboriginal people and to be able to build and create relationships and build liaisons with governments. John in Fort McMurray presented that by having people from Aboriginal communities and from Canadian society working together will lead to more awareness and understanding of Aboriginal policy.
Everybody [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] should be involved so that we get mutual understanding of Aboriginal policy and how to implement Aboriginal policy. I think we have enough people that are adequately trained but it would be nice to have people from both cultures participate so that there is no exclusion felt or whatever, so there is more awareness or understanding. (*John, personal communication, December 4, 2006).

Gary Parenteau stressed the importance of Aboriginal people building good relationships and working with the Canadian government, regardless which government is in power.

People that are politically astute and willingly that have ability in negotiating, facilitating and delivering. I say all those in the context of people that are able to work with government regardless of which governments in power or which province you are in or which community you’re in. It’s the ability to work as good relationships good liaison in those areas. (Gary Parenteau, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

Focusing on the municipal levels, both Gloria Mahussier in Prince Albert and Lyle Oliver in Vancouver presented it is the responsibility on the part of municipalities to recognize the importance of Aboriginal people and communities within local regions. Gloria Mahussier expressed this could lead to further building capacity of Aboriginal people’s involvement in policy and the decision-making processes.

I would say changing the attitude of the committee to a community so that they understand that there is value in having Aboriginal people on the policy decision making process or in it. I think that would be something that would need to happen and with that it would build the capacity in the Aboriginal organizations in the city to actually make those decisions. (Gloria Mahussier, personal communication, August 25, 2006).

However, Cindy Blackstock focused on a larger perspective stating there is a need for reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and Canadians.

We need reconciliation in this country. We need a fundamental shift in the way that we understand one another and the way that Canada as a government understands us and the way that we understand them. There’s never been an accounting of that. We’ve never taken a process to be one, where we come together as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians to acknowledge a history of this country, both the joyous parts and the parts that hurt. To learn from the history and then to
develop a joint mission and go forward. Until that foundation is there we will simply not be able to achieve the outcomes for any of our citizens that we want to see. (Cindy Blackstock, personal communication, August 3, 2006).

Unity
There were many people who spoke of the need for Indigenous people to unite and to collectively stand together to address the current situations that many people live. As Liz stated it is by relying on our own capacity and working together that Aboriginal people will be able to achieve the meaning of self-determination and to create the foundation for “good Aboriginal policy.’

Working together - that issue is so important for us to work together instead of looking for someone to do it for us or for help from the outside. We need to use our own resources. We need to start looking inward and start doing it for ourselves. We tend to give the credibility to people outside of our community and also give the resources to people outside of our community rather than looking inward and taking care of ourselves and I think that’s the direction that needs to be taken in order to provide a good sound basis for good policy. (*Liz, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

Stephen Germain emphasized the need for unity amongst the younger Aboriginal population.

The greatest capacity we can have is the unity of the new generation of Aboriginal people in Canada. I think that is the capacity we need to direct efficient policy development for our future Aboriginal people. And I think that if we can get this generation to understand the need between reserves and to understand that they should get involved and to be well educated in the matter of cultural history and about the effects of policy development on Aboriginal people, I think that would be the most necessary factor for efficient policy development. (Stephan Germain, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

There were other people who expressed the need for Aboriginal community leaders to bring people together. *Jane in Ottawa, affirmed it is with the assistance of local community leaders and through networking or the sharing of information, Aboriginal people can learn different ways of what works/what doesn’t – which will only lead to further helping each other.
There is a social planning consul in Winnipeg. I've seen a lot of their work and it's quite progressive. They've managed to really influence social policy directions and resource allocation. That can be a really good model that can be transported into other communities. And to get the leadership - there is always urban Aboriginal leadership in urban Aboriginal communities and we need to get the champions together and help, to help one another. (*Jane, personal communication, August 8, 2006).

Furthermore, others expressed the need to create a unified place within the urban locations or creating a space where Aboriginal people can become involved and voice concerns.

For Aboriginal people, we’re not we’re not given a place where we can voice our concerns. There is no specific entity it seems where we could all come together in a unified way and voice what our concerns are. (Deana Michel, personal communication, July 26, 2006).

In terms of the policy development for urban Aboriginal people I don’t think there’s been enough and I don’t think there is really any kind of strategic approach on how to deal with the urban situations and how to really make sure the voices of the Aboriginal people in urban settings are being first of all listen to and second of all carried forward to people who can do something about it. (Jocelyn Formsma, personal communication, August 7, 2006).

Stan Williams stated living within urban locations creates challenges for Aboriginal peoples, yet advocates for others to achieve self-determination, embrace ones’ culture and community and continue to press forward.

It is challenging. Urban Aboriginal realities are really challenging but I think we need to stay committed. I urge people to stay committed to realizing their right to self-determination and embracing their culture and their communities and don’t be afraid to engage in innovative ideas and create new partnerships. (Stan Williams, personal communication, July 25, 2006).
Conclusion

The current environment of policy development was discussed with various Aboriginal political leaders, organizations, students, parents, youth, respected Elders, and other community members.

Many times, participants expressed the numerous social urban Aboriginal issues emanating from historical Indian/Aboriginal policies that have resulted in the elimination of identity, culture, removal of children, language, and access to traditional resources and lands, and banning all means of governance.

The participants also expressed the value of Aboriginal peoples’ participation in policy development. However, it was the current processes in developing Aboriginal policies that held the greatest concern with the low level of participation by grassroots organizations and individuals. Most often, the local or grassroots level were recommended as starting points for positive changes and the creation of pragmatic policy development.

When dealing with the current situation of Aboriginal peoples’ lives, there is the need to involve diverse groups of Aboriginal people to determine the necessary solutions. An inclusive approach where Aboriginal people are active participants in shaping the direction of their lives is a starting point for achieving equity and well-being for Aboriginal Peoples and communities.

The landscape for urban Aboriginal peoples is rapidly changing as the majority of Aboriginal people settle into cities and towns. While Aboriginal communities in urban centres expand subsequently, the Aboriginal governance and community structures as supported by policy creation is taking place. As heard throughout the Interviews conducted, the Talking Circles, and the Community Forums, Aboriginal people have voiced their ideas and recommendations for their involvement in policy creation.
Recommendations

The summary of findings and recommendations are based on the research as to how urban Aboriginal people aspire to participate in policy development – and that it goes beyond participation – but must ensure that Aboriginal policy is created and written by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people based on their own cultural perspectives and understanding. Some of the participants in this research project expressed that simply being interviewed for this research project was their way of providing input and wanted to see this type of research and engagement continued and further expanded upon.

As a direct outcome from these recommendations, the CNPR will reflect on the methodology incorporated throughout this research and create an overview of the Indigenous methodologies used. The CNPR will utilize this national project and the voices of the participants to assist in the development of the CNPR’s own standards of Ethics as directed by the recommendations.

Research

*That Aboriginal people are behind the research and are conducting the research – this was highlighted by the participants as necessary.*

*There needs to be involvement of Aboriginal peoples in all stages of the policy creation process from the data collection, to the writing of policy, and in the evaluation and revision of policies.*

*Policy development is not a short term process or a onetime initiative. Ongoing consultations must take place, and in a manner that is culturally appropriate based on the protocols in each community.*

*Participants expressed a desire for a longer time period to build up connection within the communities and to build trust.*
Policy Development

Participants expressed a desire for councils or boards on policy creation and development from the local to national levels.

That is inclusive of all sectors of Aboriginal communities – ensuring representatives from women, youth, leaders, and Elders.

Invitations/notices to the Aboriginal community blasted through a variety of means – internet, media, and word of mouth, through Aboriginal structures/organizations.

The establishment of a Aboriginal policy resource centre – to conduct outreach – but to also allow community members to contact a place if they are looking for information/ ways to become involved, place to voice concerns on policies.

Workshops for larger community to understand the policy process – involving Aboriginal people, government representatives.

Policy must be written in a language that is easily understood by all.

Workshops for non-Aboriginal people to learn about Aboriginal peoples lives, areas of concerns, Aboriginal perspectives on these things – to inform non-Aboriginal people.

The process of developing, creating, implementing and revising policy is a lengthy process and it is often conducted removed from
the people. Participants expressed this could lead to discouragement or a barrier for people when they do not see immediate or tangible results of input they may have had, resulting in feeling their input is meaningless.

Combine policy development activities in conjunction with other events.

Numerous people throughout this project stated that if there had been a dinner or food available then more people would have come to the event. One of the recommendations is to have a feast – to combine the topic of policy development with other events that are taking place.
Appendixes

Appendix A – Urban Aboriginal Participation Interview Questions

Section A (optional)
1) Date of birth:
2) Gender:

Section B
1) Do you self-identify as an Aboriginal person?
2) What do you consider your primary identity to be?
   - First Nations (status Indian)
   - Non-Status Indian
   - Métis
   - Inuit
   - Other (please specify)
   - Don’t know/no answer
3) Are you an urban resident? YES NO
4) If yes, how long have you been an urban resident?
5) Do you plan on residing in the urban centre:
   - Temporary?
   - Long-term?
6) How would you define the urban Aboriginal community?
7) What are your thoughts or understanding of urban Aboriginal policy?
8) What urban issues are important to you personally, as an Aboriginal person?
9) And in the broader sense, what urban issues are important for Aboriginal people in Canada?
10) Would you like to have input on these issues you have described?
11) If so, how would you like to have input?
12) Do you believe urban Aboriginal peoples need to be involved in policy development?
13) If yes, why?
14) If no, why?
15) When do urban Aboriginal people need to be involved in policy development?
   - As a matter of general policy?
   - At the earliest developmental stage?
   - At the decision-making stage?
   - Prior to implementation?

16) Who should be involved/participate in urban Aboriginal policy development?
   - Nationally
   - Regionally
   - Locally

17) What would an inclusive approach to urban Aboriginal policy development entail?

18) What capacity is necessary for urban Aboriginal people to participate in policy development?

19) Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Appendix B – Urban Aboriginal Participation Talking Circle Questions

1. What are the barriers/enablers to urban Aboriginal people participating in policy development?
   a. For consultations?
   b. For community members unaffiliated with organizations?
   c. How can those barriers be alleviated and eliminated?
   d. How can we encourage the use of the enablers?

2. What would proper consultation of urban Aboriginal people entail/look like?

3. How can the Canadian government better respond to the policy concerns of Aboriginal people?

4. How can we ensure full representation of the community in policy concerns including Elders, Youth, Women, community members?
References


Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS). 1998. Ethical principles for the conduct of research in the north. Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, Ottawa ON.


