

# MÉTIS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, AND THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

## AN URBAN WINNIPEG PERSPECTIVE

Prepared for the Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances  
Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair

Manitoba Metis Federation and Metis Child and Family Services Authority

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# Introduction

This paper is the joint submission of the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Metis Child and Family Services Authority to Phase Three of the *Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair* (the Inquiry). The submission is devoted to both the social conditions surrounding Métis children and families' exposure to the child welfare system in Winnipeg and the issues reflected in Phase Two of the Inquiry as they relate to the Métis Child and Family Services Authority and its agencies.

Learning and understanding the historical experiences the Métis people have endured is essential to changing the social realities for Métis people today. These experiences include the legacy of the Residential School system, the ambiguous approach to Métis formal schooling, the 'Sixties Scoop' and many other harmful colonial practices. To ensure the success of initiatives and investment in the Métis community, a healthy foundation must be built addressing the unique circumstances of Métis experiences.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of naming colonialism as a major and central source of harm to Métis people is not intended to place blame, but rather it is critical in understanding the systemic structures of prejudice and racism that operate in ways that adversely affect Métis knowledge, teachings, way of life and ultimately healing. The current realities that many Métis children and families in Winnipeg face, cannot be appropriately understood, much less constructively addressed, unless the root causes are named.

This submission will tell the story of what matters for Métis children and families in addressing the Inquiry's objectives, providing the historical perspective to the contemporary quality of life gaps that affect Métis peoples' relationship with the child welfare system in Winnipeg. Through a better understanding of the challenges facing the Métis community, an analysis of the significant difficulties facing the devolution of Métis child and family services will be presented.

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, P., Bopp, M., & Bopp, J. (1998). Community healing and Aboriginal social security reform. Lethbridge, AB: Four Worlds International Institute for Human and Community Development.

The submission will provide a purposeful statement of reconciliation which concludes with a series of recommendations that provide considerable scope for mending the structural deficiencies that currently impede the delivery of culturally relevant programs and services to Métis children and families. The recommended structural changes are based on the distinct circumstances and experiences of Métis people in Winnipeg engaging existing policy lines agreed to in the province.

# Historical Synopsis

## *The Beginning of Formal Education in the Red River*

In the early 1820's Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries arrived at the Red River settlement and began to develop a school system. The goal of the missionaries was to create a civilised society by transplanting 19<sup>th</sup> century European ideals and culture into the settlement. From 1820 to 1870 the Red River population was made up of English and French speaking Métis, First Nations, Scottish settlers and Canadiens, with the majority of the population being Métis. The development of the settlement saw the creation of social divisions that were based on race, class, religion and language.<sup>2</sup>

Both Anglican and Catholic missionaries saw Aboriginal way of life as uncivilised and sought to impose European culture, religion, education and industry to the Red River.<sup>3</sup>

By 1870, Anglican and Catholic school systems were firmly established in the Red River settlement. However, the goal of creating a civilised European society continued to prove a challenge. While many Métis did attend school, the missionaries were still unable to convince the francophone Métis that their traditional activities were detrimental to their becoming civilised. Many missionaries were left to conclude that the effectiveness of their lessons were dependent on how long children stayed in missionary school and away from the influence of their families and traditions. Missionaries sought to remove Métis and First Nations children from their homes and place them in an environment where discipline, obedience, Christianity and academics replaced Métis and First Nations traditions and culture.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hébert, R. (2006). Manitoba's French-language crisis: a cautionary tale. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Annuik, J. (2006). Forming civilization at Red River: 19th-century missionary education of Métis and First Nations children. *Prairie Forum*, 31(1), 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Around this time the political landscape in the Red River began to change. The newly formed Government of Canada stated its intention to take over all of the Hudson's Bay Company operations including the lands occupied by the Métis in the Red River.<sup>5</sup>

## *The Birth of Manitoba: Class, Dispossession and Marginalization*

Ottawa's strategy of 'defensive expansion'<sup>6</sup> to restrain American expansionism and to create a market in the western prairies for central Canadian industry, commerce and finance inevitably brought it into direct contact with the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement. The federal government's acquisition and subsequent control of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1868-9, as well as Ottawa's categorical rejection of any provincial legislative control of the land and natural resources within the newly formed Province of Manitoba (1870),<sup>7,8</sup> were designed to turn the province and the remainder of the prairie region into a staple-producing colony of the Dominion.<sup>9,10</sup>

High on the federal government's agenda was the construction of a transcontinental railway which would promote settlement and commercial agriculture in the prairies, which would in turn provide a protected market for monopoly capital based in the East.<sup>11</sup> But in order to carry out this ambitious economic policy successfully, the contentious land question needed to be resolved. The arrival of land survey crews in 1869 sparked the Red River Resistance in the same year and forced Ottawa to negotiate with the Métis.

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<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services.

<sup>6</sup> Aitken, H. (1967). Defensive Expansion: The state and economic growth in Canada. In Easterbrook, W. & Watkins, M. (Eds). Approaches to Canadian economic history. Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> Tough, F. (1996). 'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

<sup>8</sup> Whitcomb, E. (1982). A Short History of Manitoba. Stittsville, ON: Canada's Wings, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, P. (1990). Manitoba in the Agrarian Period: 1870-1940. In Silver, J. & Hull, J. (Eds.). The Political Economy of Manitoba. (3-24). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.

<sup>10</sup> Whitcomb, E. (1982). A Short History of Manitoba. Stittsville, ON: Canada's Wings, Inc.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

The federal government proposed a land grant to extinguish Indian title as a condition of Manitoba's entry into Confederation.<sup>12</sup> The *Manitoba Act* provided that 1.4 million acres was to be appropriated, selected, divided and granted to the children of the Métis heads of families "for the benefit of the families of the half-breed residents".<sup>13</sup> The *Act* also ensured the protection of land tenure developed in Red River prior to the transfer of Rupert's Land.<sup>14,15</sup>

Métis residents on river lots were required to obtain clear (British) title, a process that necessitated land settlement and improvement.<sup>16</sup> In Canada's view, large tracts of prime land should neither be left to subsistence agriculture nor allowed to lay fallow.<sup>17</sup>

During this period the Red River Métis were forced to disperse westward. The state-sponsored influx of immigrants onto the land and the building of the railway through Winnipeg, the numerous revisions of the *Act*,<sup>18</sup> and the development of sophisticated real estate markets, conspired against the Métis. The first two decades of the new province were dotted by government sponsored lawlessness, dishonesty, fraud and outright swindle when it came to land acquisitions.<sup>19</sup>

The control and commodification of land by the federal government was crucial. It would turn Manitoba and the prairies into a major market for eastern capital. Given that land was so important to the foundations of the political economy of the Métis,<sup>20</sup> what occurred in Manitoba throughout the decades of the 1870's and 80's led to the dispersal of the Red River Métis, severely impacting on of their way of life. As economist Paul

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<sup>12</sup> Tough, F. (1996). *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

<sup>13</sup> Berger, T., Aldridge, J. & Schachter, H. (2011). *Manitoba Metis Federation v. Canada & Manitoba: Appellant's Factum*. Vancouver, BC: Rosenbloom, Aldridge, Bartley & Rosling.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Tough, F. (1996). *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, P. (1990). *Manitoba in the Agrarian Period: 1870-1940*. In Jim Silver & Jeremy Hull (Eds.). *The Political Economy of Manitoba* (pp. 3-24). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Tough, F. (1996). *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

<sup>19</sup> Silver, J., & Hull, J. (Eds.). (1990). *The Political Economy of Manitoba*. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.

<sup>20</sup> Boisvert, D., & Turnbull, K. (1985). *Who are the Métis?* In *Studies in Political Economy*. 18, Autumn, 107-147.



Phillips stated, “Riel’s execution in Regina symbolised the extinction of the commons and of a political economy based on commercial fur-trade capital, pre-industrial work organization, and pre-capitalist land ownership”.<sup>21</sup> The white settlers and the remaining Métis citizens were in control, whilst the remainder of the Métis were forced to search for disappearing buffalo herds, living a marginal existence.<sup>22</sup>

## *The Residential School Era*

In 1879, Nicholas Flood Davin, an Irish-born Toronto-based journalist and lawyer was appointed to investigate the boarding school system in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Davin submitted his report just 45 days after his appointment. Davin recommended the federal government establish a partnership with the Canadian churches to operate industrial schools on a residential basis in the Canadian West. Davin had met with church and government officials in Manitoba and he too believed Aboriginal children needed to be separated from their parents in order for them to become Christianised and civilised. As recommended by Davin, from 1883 onward the Canadian Government partnered with church missionaries in the establishment of the Canadian Residential School system.<sup>24</sup> As Euro-Canadians settled on the Prairies an increasing number of Aboriginal children were placed in residential schools.

Many Métis slipped through the cracks of federal, provincial and local bureaucracies and there were few policies on education for the Métis. There was constant debate between governments and churches about Métis education and the admittance of Métis students to residential schools. Policy seemed to change whenever the government or church could benefit from a change.<sup>25</sup> First Nations children were entitled to an education because of treaty grant money and treaty settlement agreements; however Métis children were not. Despite this, Métis children were often accepted by church authorities

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<sup>21</sup> Phillips, P. (1990). Manitoba in the Agrarian Period: 1870-1940. In Jim Silver & Jeremy Hull (Eds.), *The Political Economy of Manitoba* (pp. 3-24). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey, D. (1990). The Métis province and its social tensions. In Silver, J. & Hull, J. (Eds), *The political economy of Manitoba*. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.

<sup>23</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012). *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools*. Winnipeg.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Miller, J. (1996). *Shingwauk’s vision: A history of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

into residential schools with little resistance from government authorities.<sup>26</sup> It is estimated that in Manitoba 15.69 percent of residential school students were Métis.<sup>27</sup>

Children who entered residential schools were taught how to judge themselves and other by class distinctions created by dominant Canadian society. Coming from large families and Métis communities, Métis children were not aware of Western class distinctions or definitions of poverty and racism.<sup>28</sup> They were being taught for the first time about non-Aboriginal Canada and what non-Aboriginal Canada thought of them. They were taught exactly what being a “half-breed” meant in the eyes of school personnel as they were called “*sauvage*” or “*le chien*” and were spoken to, fed, and disciplined as dogs.<sup>29</sup>

Métis Survivors of the Residential School system share many of the same intergenerational impacts as those of First Nations survivors. Long-term impacts include the loss of parenting skills, the inability to express feelings, and the effects of loss of language, culture and self-esteem.<sup>30</sup> The loss of parenting skills has affects on future generations by negatively impacting protective factors against substance abuse. The risk for substance abuse and trauma exposure increases when children are subjected to non-nurturing and ineffective parental disciplinary practices, lack of parental support, absence of family rituals, alcohol-related violence, parental psychiatric problems such as depression, sibling alcohol use and stressful life events such as verbal, physical and sexual abuse.<sup>31</sup>

A lasting legacy of the Residential School system, and of colonialism, is Aboriginal traditional heritage and culture was stolen from generations of Métis people. Language,

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<sup>26</sup> NAC, RG 10 volume 6031, file 150-9, part 1.

<sup>27</sup> Daniels, J. (2003). Ancestral pain: Métis memories of Residential School project. In (2006). Métis history and experience and Residential Schools in Canada. Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series. Edmonton, AB: Métis Nation of Alberta.

<sup>28</sup> Logan, T. (2008). A Métis perspective on truth and reconciliation. In (2008). From truth to reconciliation: transforming the legacy of Residential Schools. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Logan, T. (2001). Lost generations: the silent Métis of the Residential School system. In (2006). Métis history and experience and Residential Schools in Canada. (2006). Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series. Brandon, MB: Manitoba Metis Federation Southwest Region.

<sup>31</sup> Brave Heart, M. (2003). The historical trauma response among natives and its relationship with substance abuse: a Lakota illustration. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 35(1), 7-13.

culture, dignity, self-respect were taken along with the children. Respect for parents and Elders, as well as respect for education and the church were also stolen during the residential school era.<sup>32</sup>

Although many Métis students did attend Residential schools it was common for Métis students to attend Day Schools or not to attend school at all. Day Schools were similar to Residential Schools in that they were established for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in order to assimilate them into mainstream Euro-Canadian society. Day School survivors in Manitoba and across Canada have said physical and sexual abuse was common and they too were stripped of their language, culture and heritage.

Métis students who were turned away from Residential and Day Schools for being 'too white' were often excluded from provincial schools for being 'too Indian'.<sup>33</sup> As the federal government increasingly rejected jurisdiction over education of the Métis, Métis student's attendance at residential schools became less common. By the 1930's most Métis children were excluded from formal education because of federal government policy, while provincial education policies did not include Métis students until 1944.

## *Introducing the Child Welfare System*

As residential schools became discredited in the late nineteen fifties and early sixties, the child welfare system became the new agent of assimilation and colonization. The 'Sixties Scoop' refers to the *Adopt Indian-Métis* campaign initiated by the federal government and implemented by a number of provincial and territorial governments. Aboriginal culture was not well understood and because of cultural conflicts, racism, or economic motives, the strengths of many Aboriginal families were overlooked.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Logan, T. (2001). Lost generations: the silent Métis of the Residential School system. In (2006). Métis history and experience and Residential Schools in Canada. (2006). Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series. Brandon, MB: Manitoba Metis Federation Southwest Region.

<sup>33</sup> Logan, T. (2008). A Métis perspective on truth and reconciliation. In (2008). From truth to reconciliation: transforming the legacy of Residential Schools. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series.

<sup>34</sup> Engel, M., Phillips, N., & DellaCava, F. (2012). Indigenous children's rights: A sociological perspective on boarding schools and transracial adoption. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 20, 279-299.

Rather than recognising cultural patterns and extended family child-rearing practices the focus was on alcoholism, neglect, abuse and poverty while little effort was made by the government to address any of the etiological reasons for child maltreatment or neglect, much of which was a consequence of colonialism and the residential school era. Government social service workers would apprehend and remove children from their Aboriginal families and communities devastating children's lives and furthering the destitution of families.<sup>35</sup>

It is estimated that between the nineteen sixties through the 1980's, about 20,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their homes and fostered or adopted by white families. In some instances, children were sexually and physically abused or neglected.<sup>36</sup> The forced removal of children and youth from their Aboriginal communities has been linked with social problems such as sexual exploitation, physical and emotional abuse, substance abuse, poverty, high suicide rates, low educational achievement, and chronic unemployment.<sup>37</sup> Closed adoptions required that adoptive parents were given limited information making successful search and reunions with birth families highly unlikely.

It was found that many Aboriginal adoptees suffered socio-economic problems, including disproportionately high rates of homelessness, substance abuse and incarceration.<sup>38</sup> The loss and family break-ups echo the residential school era and the resulting trauma has been found to be similar. A lasting impact is Aboriginal children continue to make up a disproportional amount of children in care because etiological factors have still not been adequately addressed.<sup>39</sup>

In 1980, Métis and First Nations leaders campaigned heavily against the practice of adopting Aboriginal children out to families not living in the local community, particularly

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<sup>35</sup> Engel, M., Phillips, N., & DellaCava, F. (2012). Indigenous children's rights: A sociological perspective on boarding schools and transracial adoption. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 20, 279-299.

<sup>36</sup> Sage, S. (2011). *Class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of '60's Scoop' children*. Regina, SK: Aboriginal Multi-Media Society.

<sup>37</sup> Lavell-Harvard, D., & Lavell, J. (eds.). (2006). *Until our hearts are on the ground: Aboriginal mothering, oppression, resistance and rebirth*. Toronto, ON: Demeter Press.

<sup>38</sup> Engel, M., Phillips, N., & DellaCava, F. (2012). Indigenous children's rights: A sociological perspective on boarding schools and transracial adoption. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 20, 279-299.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

out of the province and country. In response, the government of Manitoba prohibited all out-of-province adoptions and appointed Judge Edwin Kimelman to chair the *Review Committee on Indian and Métis Adoptions and Placements*. The committee was tasked to conduct an inquiry into the child welfare system and how it affected Aboriginal people.<sup>40</sup>

In 1984 after reviewing all files, Judge Kimelman stated “unequivocally that cultural genocide has been taking place in a systematic, routine manner”. Released in 1985, the final report *No Quiet Place* recommended changes to Manitoba’s child welfare legislation that would facilitate cultural and linguistic heritage into the child’s development. The inquiry was the first investigation into the impacts of the child welfare system on Métis children, families and communities and helped to renew the relationship between Manitoba Metis Federation locals and child welfare offices. The report established relationships between the government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Metis Federation on child welfare issues, strengthening political will.<sup>41</sup>

## *The Devolution of Child and Family Services*

In 1988, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) was commissioned. The resulting report, which was submitted in 1991, included observations and analysis of the historical treatment of Aboriginal peoples by the social service system. The AJI noted that child welfare practices in Manitoba had a major destructive force on Aboriginal families, communities and culture.<sup>42</sup> The AJI recommended a number of changes to the child welfare system including legislating rights to culturally appropriate services and establishing a mandated Métis child and family service agency.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, a provincial election followed by a change in government soon after the report was

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<sup>40</sup> Bostrom, H., Rogan, A. & Asselin, R. (2009). The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative: Creating the Metis Child and Family Services Authority. In Wilson, F. & Mallet, M. (Eds), *Métis-Crown relations: rights, identity, jurisdiction, and governance*. Toronto, ON: Irwin Law.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Bourassa, C. (2010). Summary review of the Manitoba child welfare system for the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Report. Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel. Markham, ON: Infinity Consulting.

<sup>43</sup> Public Inquiry into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People (1991). Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba: The Justice System and Aboriginal People, vol. 1. Winnipeg.

released meant many of the recommendations, including the recommendation to create a Metis Child and Family Services Authority, were shelved.<sup>44</sup>

In 1999 however, a renewed interest in the AJI recommendations saw the creation of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC) and later the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI). The AJI-CWI was jointly established between the provincial government and Métis and First Nations leaders. It looked to implement a strategy to restructure the child welfare system within Manitoba. The most significant objective of this initiative was establishing a province-wide Métis mandate and expanding off-reserve authority for First Nations.<sup>45</sup>

The AJI-CWI recognised and acknowledged a province-wide Métis and First Nations right and authority to control the delivery of child and family services for their people. Based on the recommendation made in the AJI the AJI-CWI, the amended Principle 11 of the *Child and Family Services Act* stated that:

Aboriginal people are entitled to the provision of child and family services in a manner, which respects their unique status, and their cultural and linguistic heritage.<sup>46</sup>

Four new authorities were created as a result of the AJI-CWI, the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority, First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority, Metis Child and Family Services Authority, and General Child and Family Services Authority. The Manitoba Metis Federation, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak signed three separate memoranda of understanding to engage in restructuring the child welfare system. They were each granted the responsibility and capacity to administer and provide child and family services.

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<sup>44</sup> Bostrom, H., Rogan, A. & Asselin, R. (2009). The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative: Creating the Metis Child and Family Services Authority. In Wilson, F. & Mallet, M. (Eds), *Métis-Crown relations: rights, identity, jurisdiction, and governance*. Toronto, ON: Irwin Law.

<sup>45</sup> Bourassa, C. (2010). Summary review of the Manitoba child welfare system for the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Report. Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel. Markham, ON: Infinity Consulting.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

The government of Manitoba's primary mechanism to reallocate powers and duties was legislation. Provincial legislation was proclaimed in November 2003 to support the devolution of responsibilities from the province to the Métis, First Nations and general authorities. The Act resulted in Métis having increased authority over what happens to their children and families anywhere in the province.<sup>47</sup>

The province maintains responsibility for setting the standards for child welfare, monitoring and assessing the degree to which the authorities meet the requirements of the *Act*, the allocation and approval of funding to the authorities, as well as the provision of support services to the authorities. The authorities, however, are entitled to set their own service standards to supplement the existing provincial standards. The Métis Authority operates at arms-length from the Manitoba Metis Federation.

The new governance structure is a tremendous step toward the repatriation of Métis children.<sup>48</sup> The Métis Authority is better equipped to offer culturally appropriate services for Métis families than the previous system. This grants Métis families and communities greater self-determination.<sup>49</sup>

Although devolution promised to address the shortcomings of the old system, many systemic problems persist and continue to compromise children's best interests. In 2006, the *Report of the Manitoba Child Death Review* highlighted important deficiencies in devolution, including a lack of anti-oppressive and anti-racist training for supervisors, a lack of funding for prevention and family support programs, the reduction or capping of agency resource funding leading to unmanageable caseloads, high staff turnover, and poor health outcomes for staff.<sup>50</sup> Also in 2006, *Strengthen the Commitment: An External*

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<sup>47</sup> Bostrom, H., Rogan, A. & Asselin, R. (2009). The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative: Creating the Metis Child and Family Services Authority. In Wilson, F. & Mallet, M. (Eds), *Métis-Crown relations: rights, identity, jurisdiction, and governance*. Toronto, ON: Irwin Law.

<sup>48</sup> Bourassa, C. (2010). Summary review of the Manitoba child welfare system for the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Report. Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel. Markham, ON: Infinity Consulting.

<sup>49</sup> Bostrom, H., Rogan, A. & Asselin, R. (2009). The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative: Creating the Metis Child and Family Services Authority. In Wilson, F. & Mallet, M. (Eds), *Métis-Crown relations: rights, identity, jurisdiction, and governance*. Toronto, ON: Irwin Law.

<sup>50</sup> Schibler, B. & Newton, J. (2006). *Honouring their spirits, the child death review: A report to the Minister of Family Services & Housing Province of Manitoba*. Winnipeg, MB: Office of the Children's Advocate.

*Review of the Child Welfare System* emphasised the need for an appropriately resourced mechanism to develop and implement the goals of the AJI-CWI.<sup>51</sup>

The AJI-CWI recognised the need to provide something other than mainstream services which had historically not serviced Métis families well. The intent of devolution was to allow the Métis Authority and agencies full autonomy to work creatively with Métis children and families through culturally appropriate services that help build capacity and strengthen Métis families and communities, thus providing a better outcome for children. This process has only been partially implemented.

## ***Manitoba Métis Policy***

The Manitoba Métis Policy was developed from a recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission (AJIC). The policy builds on the cultural distinctness of the Métis as a defining feature of Manitoba's social fabric and the knowledge that enhancing Métis goals and prosperity strengthens Manitoba's social and economic vibrancy.<sup>52</sup>

The Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people in Manitoba with a unique history, culture and aspirations to be protected and nurtured while respecting diverse Métis needs and the common values shared by all Manitobans.

Endorsed by the Government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Metis Federation in 2010, the policy, aims to address three key goals identified by the AJIC:

1. Recognise Métis as leaders in the creation of Manitoba:

Métis were leaders in the creation of Manitoba and it is important to reflect both the historical role and the cultural distinctness of the Métis as one of Manitoba's Aboriginal peoples.

2. Develop better and more focused programs to close the gap:

There is an enduring gap in the quality of life between Manitoba's Métis and non-Aboriginal peoples that will only be closed through better and more focused programs.

3. Work together to coordinate programs to be more effective and efficient:

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<sup>51</sup> Hardy, M., Schibler, B. & Hamilton, I. (2006). Strengthening the commitment: an external review of the child welfare system. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Minister of Family Services and Housing.

<sup>52</sup> Government of Manitoba. (2010). Manitoba Métis Policy. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.



Departments within the Government of Manitoba have worked with the Manitoba Metis Federation and Métis people to develop and deliver programs over the years, but there has not been any overall plan. Current programs and future ones could be more effective and efficient if they were better coordinated.<sup>53</sup>

The Manitoba Métis Policy forges a renewed and continuing relationship between the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Government of Manitoba based on mutual respect, reciprocity, understanding, responsibility, sharing and transparency. The Manitoba Metis Federation is crucial in providing understanding of Métis concerns and in closing quality of life gaps between the Métis and all other Manitobans.<sup>54</sup>

The policy is made up of a series of principles and a framework. The policy principles deal with recognition, partnership, a comprehensive approach, capacity and accountability. The policy framework provides the strategic approach to improving relationships through enhancing Métis people's participation, developing a better understanding, and following a distinctions-based approach. Highlights of some of the principles and the framework elements are as follows:

- An integrated and coordinated approach to Métis issues links provincial policies and programs that affect Métis people in a more organised way, providing for a broader understanding of Métis issues and better informed decision-making processes. Through a comprehensive approach to Métis issues, strategic paths and long-term goals can be forged in closing enduring quality of life gaps. This requires improving the coordination of policies and programs with consistent implementation, bringing together diverse specialities.
- In achieving the policy's goals, sufficient human, organisational and program delivery resources, as well as better information on Métis issues are required. The Manitoba Metis Federation also requires substantive resources to ensure that it can maintain policy and planning institutional capacity, and provide the voice for the Métis citizens of the province.
- It is crucial that Métis participation in government decision-making processes is enhanced. Key decisions that affect Métis citizens must ensure that Métis leadership and governance structures drive the process, rather than react to it. Métis leadership provides the understanding of the unique traditional, cultural and corporate histories that define Métis circumstances in the province.
- A better understanding of Métis circumstances is fundamental to an evidence-based approach to Métis-specific programming. Leveraging a vast knowledge base is crucial to understanding issues so that programs and services are better tailored to meet the policy's objectives. This will ensure

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<sup>53</sup> Government of Manitoba. (2010). Manitoba Métis Policy. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

that the experience, expertise and judgment of key decision-makers is supported by the best available practical research.<sup>55</sup>

The Government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Metis Federation need to take action to implement the policy based on a thorough understanding of Métis issues, and establish benchmarks against which policy performance can be evaluated. A longstanding commitment to address the distinct circumstances of the Métis in Manitoba must be ensured as short-term responses cannot address the protractedness required in bridging the enduring quality of life gaps. Commitments to improving relationships must be at the highest political and organisational levels to ensure that political momentum does not inhibit progress on the policy's goals.

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<sup>55</sup> Government of Manitoba. (2010). Manitoba Métis Policy. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

# Social Conditions Impacting Métis Children and Families

## *Understanding Métis Geography*

Winnipeg is a city with a significant Aboriginal population. Aboriginal peoples account for 10 percent of the total population of Winnipeg, larger than the relative populations in any other city in Canada. Saskatoon and Regina have the next largest per capita concentrations of Aboriginal peoples (9 percent each), followed by Thunder Bay (8 percent).<sup>56</sup>

In 2011, nearly 80,000 people in Manitoba identified as Métis, accounting for about 6.7 percent of the province's total population.<sup>57</sup> Between 1996 and 2006, the number of people who self-identified as Métis increased by 58 percent. This increase is largely related to an increased awareness of and pride in being Métis. Most Métis people in Manitoba live in the south and in urban communities. More than half of all Métis Manitobans live in Winnipeg. About one-third of the Métis population live in small communities, often adjacent to First Nations reserves.<sup>58</sup>

Winnipeg is unique as the birthplace of the Métis Nation and home to the largest Métis urban population in Canada. In 2011, more than 46,000 Métis resided in Winnipeg, accounting for about 6.5 percent of the city's population.<sup>59</sup> Métis people account for about 60 percent of the Aboriginal population of Winnipeg, and First Nations peoples

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<sup>56</sup> Environocs Institute. (2011). *The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Winnipeg Report*, Toronto, ON: Environocs Institute.

<sup>57</sup> Statistics Canada. (2013). *National Household Survey, 2011: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

<sup>58</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). *What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy*, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>59</sup> Statistics Canada. (2013). *National Household Survey, 2011: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

account for about 38 percent. Less than one percent of the Aboriginal population of Winnipeg identify as Inuit.<sup>60</sup>

Métis represent about nine percent of the Point Douglas community area, about six percent of the Inkster and Transcona community areas, and about five and four percent of the St. Boniface and St. Vital community areas respectively. In raw numbers, most of the Métis population are located in the River East, Point Douglas, Downtown, St. Boniface and St. Vital community areas.

Métis residents in Winnipeg are more likely than other Aboriginal populations to be second or third generation residents either born or raised in Winnipeg, or are long-term residents having lived in the city for 10 years or more. 43 percent of the Métis population are first generation residents while 33 percent are second generation. Métis residents also comprise a 20 percent third generation population. This percentile were born and raised in Winnipeg and their parents and probably their grandparents were also from Winnipeg.<sup>61</sup> As of 2011, Métis residents are more likely to be born and raised in Winnipeg whilst their parents or grandparents are from another place.

When relocating from remote communities to the city, many Métis move to Winnipeg's inner city, attracted there by lower housing prices and the presence of members of their family and community. Unfortunately, moving to the inner city is usually a move from one marginalised community into another. Currently, Aboriginal people are disproportionately located in the economically and socially disadvantaged inner city area, with approximately 44 percent of Winnipeg's Aboriginal population residing there.<sup>62</sup> The inner city has approximately 120,000 people in total, and Aboriginal people constitute 20 percent of this, compared to a concentration of only 6 percent in the remainder of the city.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Environocs Institute. (2011). *The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Winnipeg Report*, Toronto, ON: Environocs Institute.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Silver, J. (2006). *In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities*, Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

<sup>63</sup> Carter, T. (2009). *Planning for newcomers in Winnipeg's inner city*. Winnipeg, MB: Metropolis.

## *Understanding Métis Demography*

Proportionately three times as many Métis children are raised by a young mother compared to all other children. Métis children are also more likely to be raised by a single parent, although these children are often also raised by members of their extended family. Both the young age of parents and the proportion of households led by a single parent contribute to a higher proportion of Métis children being raised in low-income families. Furthermore, with a rapidly aging Métis population, more Métis families will be caring for both children and the elderly in the future.<sup>64</sup>

Provincially, the percentage of Métis children in families receiving provincial income assistance is significantly higher than for all other Manitoba children (28.5 versus 13.1 percent). There are strong correlations between increases in premature mortality rates and community areas displaying a greater percentage of children in families receiving provincial income assistance.<sup>65</sup>

Manitoba's Métis population is younger than the broader population. This has important consequences on the demand for public services, with the most obvious being an increasing number of Métis children in the primary and secondary school system, and an increasing demand for post-secondary education. As these children age, they will make up an increasing proportion of the labour force, and their success will have a significant impact on Manitoba's overall prosperity. As with the broader population, the Métis population is also aging fast. The number of Métis people retiring from the workforce will increase three-fold in the next decade. As a result, the need for adequate pensions, housing, and healthcare for Métis seniors and their families will be increasingly important.<sup>66</sup>

Winnipeg has noticeably higher proportions of younger Métis people compared to all other residents. Métis youth in Winnipeg (zero to 25 years) comprise 40.8 percent of the

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<sup>64</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>65</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>66</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

population compared to 30.7 percent for all other residents. Métis children (under 15 years) comprise 24.8 percent of the Métis population in Winnipeg compared to 17.2 percent of all other residents. In contrast, those aged over 65 years comprise 8.6 percent of the Métis population in Winnipeg compared to 14 percent of all other residents.<sup>67</sup> The population for Métis is most pronounced at the two ends of the age distribution.

## *Socio-Economic Indicators of Poverty*

It is impossible to discuss poverty issues that affect the Métis Nation without understanding colonialism and the ways it continues to impact the lives of Métis people in Winnipeg.<sup>68</sup> The historic circumstances of class, dispossession and marginalisation imposed on the Métis, coupled with the socio-political uncertainty of jurisdiction over issues that affect their lives, have had a profound effect on Winnipeg's Métis residents.

A recent examination of the state of Winnipeg's inner-city poverty using 2006 Census data showed that poverty among Métis people in Winnipeg is double the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. With regard to children, it was found that Métis children under the age of six residing in Winnipeg made 65 percent of the Aboriginal poverty rate, compared to 23 percent for non-Aboriginal children in the same age group. Overall, Métis children residing in Winnipeg were found to be almost three times more likely to be poor than non-Aboriginal children.<sup>69</sup>

Not only was it found that Métis people in Winnipeg were more likely to be poor compared to non-Aboriginal people, but it was also determined that Métis people living in the inner city were more likely to be poor than Aboriginal people who did not live there.

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<sup>67</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>68</sup> Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. (2012). Recommendations for Implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act (Manitoba). Winnipeg, MB: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

<sup>69</sup> MacKinnon, S. (2009). Tracking Poverty in Winnipeg's Inner City, 1996-2006. In Mackinnon, S., & Brody, J. (Eds.). State of the Inner City 2009. Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Of all Winnipeg Aboriginal households, 46 percent were poor, compared to 65 percent of Aboriginal households in the inner city.<sup>70</sup>

Many studies have shown that urban Métis people fare worse on nearly every social and economic indicator, compared to the all other residents.<sup>71</sup> The city of Winnipeg is a prime example of this, as large portions of the city's Aboriginal population are much worse off than its non-Aboriginal population with respect to these social and economic indicators.<sup>72</sup> Similar to Canada's total urban Aboriginal population, Winnipeg's urban Aboriginal population experience high rates of unemployment, homelessness, poverty and health issues, and tend to have lower levels of educational attainment compared to the non-Aboriginal population.<sup>73</sup>

Poverty is related to substandard housing, poor health outcomes, reduced access to education and job opportunities, and crime.<sup>74</sup> The table at **Appendix A** provides selected indicators of the socio-economic gap for Métis residents of Winnipeg.

Many Métis people were historically marginalised in Manitoba. This led to a gap in social and economic well-being that has endured for more than a century. The following pages provide a brief review of the current gap in quality of life between Métis and all other residents of Winnipeg.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> MacKinnon, S. (2009). Tracking Poverty in Winnipeg's Inner City, 1996-2006. In Mackinnon, S., & Brody, J. (Eds.). State of the Inner City 2009. Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<sup>71</sup> Hanselmann, C. (2001). Urban Aboriginal people in western Canada. Calgary, AB: Canada West Foundation.

<sup>72</sup> Carter, T., Polevychok, C., Sarget, K., & Seguire, M. (2004). Scoping research on issues for municipal governments and Aboriginal people living within their boundaries. Ottawa, ON: Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

<sup>73</sup> Distasio, J., Sylvester, G., Jaccubucci, C., Mulligan, S., & Sargent, K. (2004). First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study: Final Report. Winnipeg, MB: Institute of Urban Studies, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs & Manitoba Metis Federation.

<sup>74</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

## Health

Key health indicators are significantly higher for Métis in Winnipeg than for all other residents. Provincially, premature mortality<sup>76</sup> for Métis is significantly higher than the rate for all other Manitobans. For those aged between zero and 74 years, Métis deaths are at a rate of 4.0 per 1,000 compared with 3.3 per 1,000 for all other Manitobans. In Winnipeg, the Métis premature mortality rate is also significantly higher than that for all other residents at a rate of 4.2 per 1,000 versus 3.3 per 1,000, showing the gap that exists in the urban Winnipeg environment.<sup>77</sup>

Provincially, Métis display a similar prevalence of cumulative mental illness when compared to all other Manitobans (28.4 versus 25.9 percent). Métis also display a similar prevalence of depression compared to all other Manitobans (22.0 versus 20.4 percent). The second highest prevalence of cumulative mental illness for Métis is in Winnipeg (after Brandon) (32.7 percent Métis, 27.5 percent all others).

Métis prevalence of substance abuse is statistically significantly higher when compared provincially to all other Manitobans (7.2 versus 4.9 percent). The prevalence of substance abuse in Winnipeg's Métis population is nearly double that of all other Winnipeg residents (8.1 versus 4.8 percent).<sup>78</sup>

Completed or attempted suicide prevalence among Métis in Manitoba is 1.4 times that of all other Manitobans (0.11 versus 0.08 percent). In Winnipeg, the prevalence of complete and attempted suicide for Métis is similar to the provincial average, but is significantly lower for all other residents. This portrays a significant elevation with Métis being higher than all other residents in Winnipeg (0.10 versus 0.06 percent).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Premature Mortality refers to deaths that can be considered to have occurred before their due time. This concept underlies the potential years of life lost measure of mortality.

<sup>77</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*



## Education

A post-secondary education is directly related to a number of quality of life indicators, including health, employment, income, and housing. While more Métis people are finishing high school and completing post-secondary programs than before, they continue to lag behind the non-Aboriginal population. In today's complex society, having the reading and writing skills associated with high school completion are an important measure of functional literacy. Functional literacy provides the foundation for future learning and creates opportunities for individuals, their families, and their communities. Without this foundation, access to post-secondary education and options for well-paying jobs are limited.<sup>80</sup>

Provincially, Métis high school completion rates are lower than for all other students (66.2 versus 78.4 percent).<sup>81</sup> In Winnipeg, Métis students have a statistically lower high school completion rate compared with all other students (63.2 versus 79.6 percent).<sup>82</sup>

A statistically significantly lower pass rate on the Grade 12 Language Arts Standards Test for Métis is evident across Manitoba when compared to all other students (46.5 versus 58.1 percent). There is also a slightly higher fail rate (6.4 versus 5.7 percent), an equivalent withdrawn rate (10.9 versus 10.8 percent), and a much higher retention (continuing) rate (23.0 versus 16.6 percent) for Métis students compared to all other Manitoban students.<sup>83</sup>

Métis students have a statistically lower pass rate compared to all other students in Winnipeg on the Grade 12 Language Arts Standards Test (46.2 versus 64.2 percent). This is mainly driven by retention (or continuing) where in Winnipeg the percentage of Métis students in Grade 11 or lower is much higher than for all other students (22.0 versus 13.8 percent). The rate of retention at least once from Kindergarten to Grade 8

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<sup>80</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>81</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

for Métis children is statistically higher than for all other students in Winnipeg (3.7 versus 1.9 percent).<sup>84</sup>

### Employment

The Métis population is young. Approximately 64 percent are under the age of 35, compared to 48 percent of the broader population. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Younger workers have much higher unemployment rates than older more experienced workers. However, being a younger population also means that they will make up disproportionate amount of future labour force growth.<sup>85</sup> A younger Métis population means that the potential gains from training and employment programs are expected to be greater than those for all other residents. Additionally, the benefits of enhancing Métis human capital can be realised over a longer time period.<sup>86</sup>

A recent study of Métis labour market trends indicated that Métis have high participation rates, higher than the broader labour force,<sup>87</sup> predominantly due to a youthful demographic. However, Métis unemployment rates presented higher than all others, particularly in Winnipeg where Métis unemployment rates (4.8 percent in 2007)<sup>88</sup> were double those of all other residents.<sup>89</sup> When this trend is applied to educational attainment a clear message is projected in informing policy makers to the contemporary challenges of Métis.

When compared to all other residents in Winnipeg, the Métis are significantly over represented at the lower end (less than a high school diploma) of educational attainment and significantly under represented at the higher end (post-secondary bachelors and

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<sup>84</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>85</sup> Vandament, T. (2012). Closing the Gap: Partnering for Métis Labour Market Success. Calgary, AB: Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>86</sup> Sharpe, A., & Arsenault, J. (2009). A Review of the Potential Impacts of the Métis Human Resources Development Agreements in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Human Resources Skills Development Canada.

<sup>87</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>88</sup> Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. (2011). Poverty Profile: Aboriginal Peoples. Winnipeg, MB: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

<sup>89</sup> Sharpe, A., & Arsenault, J. (2009). A Review of the Potential Impacts of the Métis Human Resources Development Agreements in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Human Resources Skills Development Canada.

above). This can explain the over representation of Métis in unemployment as described in the labour market analysis.<sup>90</sup>

The employment indicators suggest that the unemployment rate decreases with each level of educational attainment. Those with a high school diploma or less, clearly represent the highest levels of unemployment. Furthermore, the gap in unemployment rates between Métis and all others decreases with every level of educational attainment. This is clear evidence to suggest that policy makers should be supporting Métis students in all levels of educational attainment.<sup>91</sup>

Provincially, the percentage of young adults receiving provincial income assistance is significantly higher (over double) for Métis compared to all other Manitobans (21.1 versus 9.8 percent). In Winnipeg, the percentage of Métis young adults receiving provincial income assistance is higher than that of all other residents (24.3 versus 12.4 percent).<sup>92</sup>

In 2005, the median income for Métis in Manitoba was 24 percent lower than for all other residents.<sup>93</sup> In 2007, the average hourly wage for Métis people in Manitoba was \$18.32 per hour compared to \$20.55 per hour for all others, and proportionately more Métis families live in poverty compared to all other families.<sup>94</sup>

### Housing

Affordable and adequate housing is a major contributor to well-being. In 2006, almost one in four Métis families spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing, compared to one in ten of other families. Métis families are also twice as likely as other families in Manitoba to be living in housing that is in need of major repair. The 2006

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<sup>90</sup> Sharpe, A., & Arsenault, J. (2009). *A Review of the Potential Impacts of the Métis Human Resources Development Agreements in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Human Resources Skills Development Canada.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). *Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>93</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). *What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy*, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>94</sup> Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. (2011). *Poverty Profile: Aboriginal Peoples*. Winnipeg, MB: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

Census also shows that Métis have relatively low levels of home ownership compared to all other Manitobans. Levels of home ownership reflect income levels and the well-being and stability of a community. Home ownership is also an indication of how well Métis families are able to progress economically through land and resource ownership.<sup>95</sup>

A relatively recent mobility study found that of 1,350 interviews with Métis, First Nations and Inuit people who had recently moved to Winnipeg, 50 percent were homeless and forced to live temporarily with friends and family.<sup>96</sup> This is a result of Winnipeg's chronic shortage of housing, especially low-income rental housing.<sup>97</sup> For example, urban Aboriginal housing groups in Winnipeg collectively have over 2,400 people on their waiting lists for the 800 units of housing that they manage,<sup>98</sup> and the Manitoba Housing Authority has more than 3,000 people on waiting lists for its 8,000 subsidised housing units in Winnipeg.<sup>99</sup>

In 2006, about 16 percent of Métis, First Nations and Inuit people with housing in Winnipeg were living in a home requiring major repairs, a figure that was unchanged from 2001.<sup>100</sup> In comparison, 8 percent of all other residents with housing were living in homes that needed major repairs, down from 9 percent in 2001.<sup>101</sup> The prevalence of housing overcrowding, when the number of people exceeds the number of rooms, has been proven as the single best predictor of criminality in a localised area.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>96</sup> Distasio, J., Sylvester, G., Jaccubucci, C., Mulligan, S., & Sargent, K. (2004). First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study: Final Report. Winnipeg, MB: Institute of Urban Studies, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs & Manitoba Metis Federation.

<sup>97</sup> Silver, J. (2006). In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities, Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

<sup>98</sup> Carter, T., Polevychok, C., Sarget, K., & Seguire, M. (2004). Scoping research on issues for municipal governments and Aboriginal people living within their boundaries. Ottawa, ON: Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

<sup>99</sup> Miko, R., & Thompson, S. (2004). Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids? Tough Choices. Women and Environments International Magazine. 62/63: 8-9.

<sup>100</sup> Statistics Canada. (2006). Aboriginal People in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis, and First Nations, 2006 Census. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

<sup>101</sup> Statistics Canada. (2010). 2006 Aboriginal Population Profile for Winnipeg. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

<sup>102</sup> Silver, J. (2006). In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities, Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Métis people are over represented among those experiencing housing crises in Winnipeg. A 2010 study showed that 22 percent of all people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg are Métis.<sup>103</sup> Almost two thirds of Métis, First Nations and Inuit people surveyed during the study were not born in Winnipeg. While the majority of these people move to the city for a better life, it is often more difficult to find a home, a job, and support than people anticipate. Young people are targeted by gang members, who wait at bus and train stations looking for new recruits.<sup>104</sup>

When families lose their housing, many parents avoid seeking out assistance for fear that their children will be exposed the child welfare system. If children are removed by Child and Family Services, parents receive less income and often lose access to a number of services, making it even more challenging to find housing and therefore reunite their family. Studies have shown that the trauma of becoming homeless is severe and lasts long after someone finds a permanent home.<sup>105</sup>

Women expressed the difficult choices that confronted them when becoming homeless with regard to their children. The choices usually include taking them to a shelter or a potentially unsafe location, leaving them with friends, relatives, or the child welfare system. Each of these options negatively impact on both the healthy development of the child, and the health and well-being of the mother and may lead to a cycle of homelessness. A number of studies have linked a child's experiences with the child welfare system to homelessness later in life or upon leaving care.<sup>106</sup>

The single most common reason people gave for becoming homeless is economic. More specifically, homelessness most often was reported to result from the convergence of factors, including the cost of rent being very high in a low-vacancy market, the current stock of social housing is too low and often substandard, and incomes are too low or

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<sup>103</sup> Gessler, S., Maes, C. & Skelton, I. (2010). Winnipeg street health report. Winnipeg, MB: Main Street Project.

<sup>104</sup> Maes, C. (2011). Shared stories, silent understandings: Aboriginal women speak on homelessness in Winnipeg. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba.

<sup>105</sup> Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. (2012). A Place to call home: Homelessness in Winnipeg in 2011. Winnipeg, MB: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

unstable. The second most common reason is eviction, predominantly as a result of addiction, falling further into poverty and relationship break-ups.<sup>107</sup>

Available literature on homelessness and housing repeatedly demonstrates that housing is a key determinant of health inferring that a lack of quality affordable housing is damaging to human health.<sup>108</sup> Studies have also shown that housing has a positive effect on quality of life for the following reasons, housing serves as a place of refuge, an important aspect of a person's identity, a crucial setting for social interaction, and an important place of continuity, stability and permanence in everyday life.<sup>109</sup>

A substantial number of homeless people in Winnipeg have had contact with the social service system (43 percent of respondents of a 2010 study had been in the care of child welfare as a child or youth). According to a 2002 Canadian study,<sup>110</sup> there is a direct link between youth homelessness and the child welfare system. The study noted that the age at which a youth left care was directly linked to the likelihood of homelessness and the younger the youth, the more likely they were to experience homelessness. Youth exiting the child welfare system were not adequately prepared for and supported in leaving the system, and just because a youth turns the age of majority, they aren't necessarily ready to live independently and often require further support. The rigidity of the child welfare system is one of the reasons for the poor outcomes of youth aging out of care.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Gessler, S., Maes, C. & Skelton, I. (2010). Winnipeg street health report. Winnipeg, MB: Main Street Project.

<sup>108</sup> Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social determinants of health: The Canadian facts. Toronto, ON: York University School of Health Policy and Management.

<sup>109</sup> Dunn, J. (2002). The population health approach to housing: A framework for research. Ottawa, ON: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

<sup>110</sup> Serge, L., Eberle, M., Goldberg, M., Sullivan, S., & Dudding, P. (2002). The pilot study: The child welfare system and homelessness among Canadian youth. Ottawa, ON: The National Secretariat on Homelessness.

<sup>111</sup> Gessler, S., Maes, C. & Skelton, I. (2010). Winnipeg street health report. Winnipeg, MB: Main Street Project.

# Metis Child and Family Services Authority

The Métis Child and Family Services (MCFS) Authority is an incorporated entity with an independent Board of Directors, responsible to administer and manage service delivery for Métis and Inuit people in Manitoba. Through the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act*, the MCFS Authority has the power to grant mandates to affiliated service providers and receives funding from the government to carry out such tasks. In order to fulfill its mandate, the MCFS Authority manages and monitors the provision of services to Métis and Inuit children and families by developing policy, setting priorities and assessing the needs of Métis and Inuit communities in consultation with its service providers, the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency (which supports the Winnipeg, Interlake, Eastman, Western and Central regions) and the Michif Child and Family Services Agency (which supports The Pas, Thompson and Parkland regions) (Agencies).

There are currently 1,060 children in the care of Métis Child, Family and Community Services (858) and Michif Child and Family Services (202). Of these children, 799 are Métis, 202 are First Nations (138 status and 64 non-status), and 59 are non-Aboriginal.

The MCFS Authority believes in building healthy and vibrant Métis communities through love, respect, honour, strength, culture and heritage with guidance from our Elders and families.

The MCFS Authority is committed, accountable and responsible for the child and family services system to the Métis people of Manitoba and contributes to a strong and healthy Métis Nation through the strength of Elders, family, children, culture, values and heritage.

The MCFS Authority believes that:

- Métis and Inuit families and communities are the cornerstone of their Nations and the service delivery system must reflect this vision

- Responsibility for decision-making regarding Métis and Inuit children and families lies with the family, extended family and community whenever possible
- The organizational structure promotes and supports community governance at all levels
- The service delivery system will encompass both formal and informal elements
- The service delivery system must be operated in an efficient and effective manner
- The service delivery system will be outcome-based and will reflect the core guiding principles of the Metis Child and Family Services Authority.

## ***Response to the Recommendations Made in the External Reviews***

Subsequent to the release of the external reviews and the recommendations presented to Government to improve service delivery in the child welfare system after the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair, Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency reviewed the recommendations and began developing service delivery programs that were culturally sensitive to the children, youth and families that they serve.

Four consistent themes emerged from the external reviews:

1. Culturally Sensitive Service Delivery;
2. Child and Youth Centred Service Delivery;
3. Youth Transitioning Out of Care Service Delivery; and
4. Family Centred Service Delivery.

### ***Culturally Sensitive Service Delivery***

In response to the recommendations regarding culturally sensitive service delivery, Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency hired a Director of Cultural Services to provide cultural guidance not only to the families the agency served, but also to the Executive Management Team ensuring that culture was reflected in all areas of the agency including permanency planning, practice principles for staff working with children, youth and families, and supports to staff when tragedies were experienced by the agency such as the death of a child in the care of or known to the agency. Two distinct



culturally sensitive programs emerged for youth and families; the Circle of Life Program and the Mothers and Kookums Program.

#### Circle of Life (COL) Program

This program is a dynamic, individualised service that uses a solution-focused, grassroots and strength-based approach when working with youth. COL workers help youth find their own way through challenges with guidance, support and encouragement. Some of the daily struggles facing our youth are addictions, peer pressure, cultural identity, grief and bullying. The youth are given opportunities to build a healthy relationship with the staff to help process and understand these challenges, feelings and worries they face constantly. The activity based approach supports the youth with building self confidence, a positive self-image and to feel better about their self identity. When a youth is supported by a caring, genuine and nonjudgmental worker, it helps the youth to internalise the praise in a positive and healthy manner. Engaging with families and expanding the children's knowledge and understanding of their culture and history are also key aspects of the program.

#### Mothers and Kookums Program

Using a strength-based approach, young mothers and Kookums (Grandmothers) gather together weekly in a supportive, non-judgemental environment to learn and practice tools for life changes. The areas of focus are self-esteem building, creating positive family time and setting routines, managing anger, budgeting, doing crafts, cooking and overall skills for life.

Although all programs are developed with the input of the Director of Cultural Services, these two programs are designed specifically to reflect Métis culture.

### ***Youth Centred Service Delivery***

A recurring concern throughout the external reviews was the child welfare system's need for services specifically designed and delivered to youth and their unique needs. The

Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency developed two programs distinct to youth centred services; the S.A.S.H (Outreach) Program and the ROADS Program.

#### The S.A.S.H (Outreach) Program

This is an outreach program that looks at supporting youth who are having difficulties in their lives that can lead to high risk victim behaviours. The program has three phases implemented to work with youth on an individual basis. The first phase is Safety; designed for the outreach worker to assess levels of risk, to develop safety plans and respond to critical situations. The second phase is Stabilization; designed to progressively activate resources and to implement team planning while developing action plans for reducing instances of “at risk” behaviours. The final phase is Prevention; designed to support the youth and caregivers in maintaining working strategies which they have developed to enhance the connections and relationships and reduce at risk behaviours. The SASH workers use a team approach to identify at risk behaviours within the Signs of Safety model to decrease the youth’s risk. SASH partners with numerous agencies and organizations such as StreetReach, Child Find Manitoba and the Sexually Exploited Youth Coalition.

#### ROADS/MISKINAWS Program

The ROADS Program is a four phase employment program for youth, including volunteerism, work experience, casual and part or full-time employment. Applicants are over the age of 16 and in care of MCFCS. Since the launch of ROADS 37 youth have used the program.

## ***Youth Transitioning Out of Care Service Delivery***

It is well known that the transition from youth to independence as an adult poses many challenges for youth. Those youth involved in the child welfare system bring about additional challenges as their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday marks the beginning of independence whether they are ready or not. Many youth in care transitioning to adulthood and independence do not have the supports financially, physically, emotionally, or otherwise to make this changeover successfully.

Metis child, family and community services has developed four programs and a celebratory event to assist youth with this transition and celebrate this momentous milestone in their lives. The programs include: Skills for Life Program, Métis Spirit Program, Life Long Connections Program, RAILS Program and the “Honouring Our Youth” Celebration.

#### Skills for Life (SFL) Program

The Skills for Life Program works with youth to gain skills to become interdependent in areas such as education, resources, training opportunities, employment, budgeting and healthy relationship building. SFL workers are paired with youth to help with the many challenges, barriers and hurdles they face. The workers assist, support, advocate, guide and encourage making choices that are positive and healthy for their well-being. A bi-weekly group support program, which brings in speakers, helps youth with challenges from mental health issues, addictions, housing, and banking. There is also a social component to the program. SFL workers encourage youth to recognise that they are not alone and assist them to develop their own problem solving style. The support program is offered in collaboration with the Métis Spirit Program and includes older youth who have aged out of care alongside the younger youth. This gives the younger youth an opportunity to discuss with the young adults some of the challenges they may face when aging out.

#### Métis Spirit Program

The Métis Spirit Program is a very unique and dynamic program which addresses the needs of young adults leaving agency care. This program is funded by the Manitoba Metis Federation. Daily challenges for our young adults include: being single parents, seeking education, employment, poverty, addictions, exploitation by individuals in the community and housing. Inability to access appropriate housing, because of limited vacancy and our youth’s lack of credit history, is an extraordinary burden. The program is growing steadily with more demands for supports from our young adults including some who have moved outside of the Province. With only one worker, the goal is to acquire funding for an additional worker to meet the demands.

#### Life Long Connections Program

The Life Long Connections Program reunites children in care of all ages with birth parent(s), extended family or significant others to expand their circle of supports and provide long term life connections.

Every child deserves to belong to a family and know their culture. The Life Long Connections Program is a coordinated, first time effort of the Métis Child Family and Community Services Agency and the Métis Nation of Manitoba to address the issues of Métis children in care throughout the province of Manitoba.

#### RAILS (Rosedale Adolescent Interdependent Living Services) Program

The RAILS Program strengthens life skills towards interdependence. It is facilitated under the guidance of trained support staff, mentors, elders and other professionals. The program is strength and relationship based and youth are supported daily to learn and practice their skills for living interdependently. Since opening, 36 youth have been assisted to live on their own. More than 70 percent of those youth continue to remain in contact with RAILS staff, drop into to the Common Area or call RAILS staff when they were struggling with housing, money or food.

#### “Honouring Our Youth” Celebration

Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency continues to host quarterly celebrations to honour the youth in care when they turn 18. Each celebration offers the youth an opportunity to celebrate this significant milestone with their friends, family and support network.

Each youth is honoured and their individual accomplishments are recognised through speeches. Of significance is the fact that the majority of those who attend the youth celebrations are family members of the youth and previously celebrated youth or alumni of the aging out ceremony are invited to be the Masters of Ceremony for this event.

## *Family Centred Service Delivery*

Recognizing the importance of family well-being and the importance of building capacity within the family, Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agencies approach to family centred service delivery is community based and designed to assist families build on their inherent strengths. There are three programs the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agencies delivers: Family Mentor Program, L.I.F.E. Program, and the Family Support Program which contain three program areas: Parent Support and Education, Respite, and Supported Family Time.

### Family Mentor Program

This is a unique program that is offered to “low risk” families. The program aligns closely to the MCFS Authority and Agencies’ Mission Statements as it strengthens the families’ capacity to care for their children through community based programs and services. As community members who participate voluntarily, the trained volunteer mentor has a unique advantage to gain a meaningful relationship with the family or youth.

### L.I.F.E (Living In Family Enhancement) Program

In the first phase of the L.I.F.E Program, families and their children live together in a foster home for a period of eight months to one year. The foster family mentors, guides, supports and acts as a role model for the parents to improve their attachment to their children, develop routines, build confidence in their parenting and develop new skills and a new direction for their parenting future. In the second phase, the parent continues to be mentored for a few hours per week, for another eight months to a year. Once this phase is completed, a celebration is held and the orders surrounding the children who are in care are rescinded or they have lapsed. Since inception, 18 children, including a long time permanent ward, have been reunified with their families and 8 other children were prevented from coming into care. One mother is in college, a second mother has registered for college and another has secured full-time employment.

### Parent Support and Education

The Parent Support and Education Program consists of Family Support Workers who are placed in the family's home to help educate and mentor parents with parenting skills and strategies for positive attachment-based engagement with their children.

### Respite

Respite is a service provided through the Family Support Program in which Family Support Workers are assigned to the family to care for their children so that families can attend programs and or appointments.

### Supported Family Time

This program encourages parents to actively engage in play, crafts, reading and snack time with their children. The space allows families to interact in a manner that is conducive to positive parenting and attachment. The program has also seen a huge increase in families utilizing the service.

## *Challenges Facing Service Delivery Programs*

The MCFS Authority and the Agencies believe in the spirit and intent of the recommendations of the external reviews and responded prudently by developing service delivery programs to address the concerns of the reviews.

In June 2012, the funding that had been billed to the Department of Family Services and Labour through Child Maintenance billings for the past seven years to support many of the programs described above was discontinued, forcing Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency into a deficit situation.

It is the MCFS Authority's belief that the programs developed by the agency as a direct response to the external reviews are unique, distinct and essential to the Métis families they serve. Furthermore, the experience of the MCFS Authority and the Agencies, as described above, is that these programs are resulting in positive outcomes.

As the MCFS Authority strongly believes in the above programs the MCFS Authority supports its Agencies continued delivery of these essential services in hopes that the government, which continues to control funding will recognise the need to support these programs.

With the refusal of the department to allow billing for these programs through the current funding model, the programs that are at risk of being terminated are as follows:

- **Director of Cultural Services** – This position has remained vacant since December 2012 when the Director of Cultural Services resigned. Given that a position like this is not supported in the funding model, MCFCS agency has kept this position vacant.
- **Mothers and Kookums** – As this program supports mothers whose children are in care and not the children directly, this program is at risk of being terminated.
- **ROADS** – Although this program is working directly with youth in care of the agency, the staff persons who coordinate the program are not supported through the funding model which places this program at risk of being terminated.
- **Life Long Connections** – Although this program is searching for the families of and/or supports to children in care, this program is not working directly with the children in care and therefore, the program is at risk of being terminated.
- **RAILS** – Although the RAILS Program is currently being supported through the Individual Rate Adjustment Protocol between the Department of Family Services and Labour and MCFS Authority, the program per diem has come under scrutiny by the Department of Family Services and Labour and is subject to program review. Depending on the results of the program review, this program may be at risk of being terminated.
- **L.I.F.E.** – Although this is considered an alternative care arrangement, the Department of Family Services and Labour has requested a legal opinion through Civil Legal Services to discuss concerns with children being placed in a foster home with their biological parents. The Department of Family Services and Labour has agreed to continue funding the program as it stands currently, but no further families will be accepted to the program until the legal opinion is provided.

Unfortunately, the way the current funding model financially supports agencies is based on the number of children in care. If the service delivery programs are not supporting children in care directly, all of the creative Métis preventative services are in jeopardy of being eliminated. The current funding model rewards the reactive step of taking children

into care and disregards the pro-active programs aimed at avoiding such an outcome. This is in direct conflict with the spirit of the AJI-CWI.

The AJI-CWI reported that it was imperative to make certain that Aboriginal people received child and family services through agencies that were culturally appropriate and able to deliver and manage programs and services based on community needs and opportunities in accordance with established standards. Not being permitted to provide services to children, youth and families as developed by the MCFS Authority and the Agencies contradicts Government's commitment to the AJI-CWI.



# Reconciliation with the Métis

When addressing the issue of why Métis families disproportionately come into contact with the child welfare system when compared to non-Aboriginal families, a true understanding of Métis issues must be achieved. A better understanding will positively affect public policy and programming decisions that are culturally appropriate and specifically relevant to Métis circumstances. Reconciliation must enhance the collective understanding of Métis history, culture and values and promote approaches in overcoming systemic marginalisation and exclusion.<sup>112</sup>

## *Cultural Cohesion*

Social cohesion relates to the area of public policy that seeks to address the capacity of a community to bond and interact in a harmonious manner. Social cohesion is a multi-faceted notion which normally correlates to theories of structural functionalism. Whilst it is extremely difficult to define social cohesion, most social researchers will agree that it generally relates to a concept of shared fundamental values, a sense of communal trust, and the willingness to participate in the community.<sup>113</sup> With this in mind, a number of spheres of exploration are believed essential to measuring the cohesiveness of communities including, economic, political and socio-cultural factors.<sup>114</sup>

Identity is a social product that is intimately connected to the reactions imputed to others. The impact of colonialism on the Métis has created extensive cultural discontinuity over time and has created structural problems in generation identity. This historical colonial impact on Métis identity remains today, and is very present in areas of high poverty. The result is that many Métis have no clearly established schema for either their personal identity, or their collective Métis identity. When individuals have problems establishing

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<sup>112</sup> Government of Manitoba. (2010). Manitoba Métis Policy. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

<sup>113</sup> Castles, S. (1999). Immigration and social cohesion. *Growth*, 47, 35-46.

<sup>114</sup> Scanlon Foundation. (2010). Social Cohesion. Melbourne, VIC: Scanlon Foundation.

their collective identity or are unclear as to what their collective identity is, they tend to lack purpose, direction and commitment.<sup>115</sup>

When Aboriginal nations are able to provide its members with referential standards upon which to build a strong collective identity, this collective identity will be assumed by the group. Until this happens, more vulnerable members of the nation (such as the youth) are confronted with a multiplicity of alternative standards that serve to confuse and hinder the development of collective identity. The growth of youth gangs in Winnipeg's inner-city attest to the outcomes for Métis youth who are collectively de-motivated. Becoming a member of a gang (for example) ultimately fulfills their aspirations and sense of identity.<sup>116</sup>

There is therefore a strong correlation with Métis identity and cultural cohesion. Cultural cohesion builds strength and connectedness of Métis individuals who share in a common history of marginalisation and dispossession, but also in a collective identity of a distinct culture that has been preserved from generation to generation for hundreds of years in the Red River Valley. It is essential that Métis individuals, who suffer a cycle of poverty and the trappings of disengagement, are enriched with cultural connectedness to overcome the burden of their distinct colonial experiences.

### *Jurisdiction over Métis*

Constitutional and legal issues regarding Crown responsibility for Aboriginal peoples have been deeply debated in Canada for over half a century, leaving some Aboriginal peoples in jurisdictional limbo. Despite the inclusion of Métis as rights bearing Aboriginal peoples in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, the federal government's current policy is that its responsibility extends only to status First Nations people and Inuit, while provincial governments have a general responsibility for Aboriginal peoples living off reserve.

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<sup>115</sup> Frideres, J. & Gadacz, R. (2012). *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Pearson Publishing.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

Neither the federal nor the provincial governments have accepted any special responsibility for the Métis.<sup>117</sup>

By virtue of subsection 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, there is a clear legal constitutional basis for federal responsibility for First Nations on-reserve. Subsequently, registered 'Indians' are eligible for a range of federal programs and services delivered by a variety of federal government departments and agencies. Some federal programs also target to off-reserve First Nations.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the recent Federal Court ruling in *Daniels v. Canada*, jurisdictional responsibility of Métis and the non-registered 'Indian' population under subsection 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* remains unclear. The federal government maintains that it does not have exclusive responsibility for these groups, and that its financial responsibilities are therefore limited.<sup>119</sup>

The debate over jurisdiction and responsibility for Métis has been the single greatest impediment to progress in developing a modern set of institutions, programs and services to further the socio-economic well-being of the Métis. It remains the longstanding position of the Métis National Council and the Manitoba Metis Federation that the federal government has jurisdiction and responsibility with respect to the Métis Nation by virtue of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.<sup>120</sup>

The provinces generally maintain that the federal government has full jurisdiction for all Aboriginal peoples while maintaining education as a provincial authority.<sup>121</sup> This has left the Métis Nation in a policy vacuum between the federal and provincial governments and resulting in Métis concerns not been addressed effectively by either level of government.

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<sup>117</sup> Eggleton, A., & Segal, H. (2009). In from the margins: A call to action on poverty, housing and homelessness. Ottawa, ON: The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology Subcommittee on Cities.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Hanselmann, C. & Gibbins, R. (2003). Another voice is Needed: Intergovernmentalism in the urban Aboriginal context. In M. Murphy (Ed.), *Reconfiguring Aboriginal-state relations; Canada: The state of the federation*, 2003. Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press.

<sup>120</sup> Métis National Council. (2004). Métis National Council Life Long Learning Policy Paper. Kelowna, BC: Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

Métis local, provincial and national governance structures do exist, but are limited in stability due to inadequate capacity. Through these structures, the Métis are prepared to maintain cooperation between governments to ensure the needs of Métis people are met through modern and efficient social programming models that are respectful to the rights and interest of Métis people and their governing institutions.<sup>122</sup>

## *Ameliorative Reconciliation*

The impacts of the legacy of colonial practices on Métis peoples have significantly shaped the social realities for Métis today. Most would agree that an end to the marginalisation of Métis people is an essential step in reconciliation. It is also generally accepted that the socio-economic circumstance of Métis people today is a direct result of past practices. There are however disagreements about the best way to deal with the past and to fix the issues which continue today.

It is essential to learn from approaches to reconciliation that have worked. In Canada, a number of advances in practical reconciliation have been undertaken in partnership with Aboriginal peoples to determine what their communities needs, and to maintain a degree of control over how services to their communities are delivered.

Therefore, Ameliorative Reconciliation asserts a partnership approach to bridging quality of life gaps for the Métis. The first step is to counteract the colonial mentality, whereby programmers in socio-economic sectors must become knowledgeable about Métis perspectives and how they are reflected in contemporary Métis culture. Past personal and generational experiences are important as is present events that will affect future generations.<sup>123</sup>

Through the joint development of the Manitoba Métis Policy, the Government of Manitoba has attempted to engage an ameliorative form of reconciliation with the Métis.

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<sup>122</sup> Métis National Council. (2006). Métis Education Report: A Special Report on Métis Education. Prepared by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research for the Summit on Aboriginal Education.

<sup>123</sup> Hart, M. (2007). Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

This is an encouraging first step toward reconciliation, however as highlighted in the previous chapter, the province's current funding model for child welfare services is inconsistent with the policy's principles and framework.

# Recommendations

## *Manitoba Métis Policy*

Endorsed in 2010, the Manitoba Métis Policy builds on the cultural distinctness of the Métis in forging a renewed and continuing relationship between the Government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Metis Federation. The policy ensures that a true understanding of Métis circumstances is reflected in reconciliation initiatives and approaches to the amelioration of the conditions of disadvantage for Métis citizens. A longstanding commitment must be achieved to ensure that protracted objectives and generational healing are achieved.

The full implementation of the Manitoba Métis Policy that ensures the policy principles and framework elements are applied comprehensively, and a renewed relationship in the province reflects the distinct needs and circumstances of the Métis.

## *Métis Knowledge Base*

Guided by the principles and framework prescribed in the Manitoba Métis Policy, the Manitoba Metis Federation is currently exploring a concept for developing a Métis knowledge base. The concept proposes the establishment of a knowledge network to accumulate evidence-based research on what works to overcome Métis disadvantage. Research initiatives will translate to evidence that will inform programming initiatives designed to bridge the enduring quality of life gaps between the Métis and the non-Aboriginal population. Timely, high quality and useable evidence will guide the progression of relevant, effective and efficient programs.

The development and implementation of a Métis-specific knowledge base to provide for an evidence-based approach to the socio-economic programming needs of the Métis.

## *A Distinctions-Based Approach*

The Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people in Manitoba and Canada with a unique history, culture and aspirations to be protected and nurtured. The Métis have also endured a unique colonial experience which requires diverse approaches to reconciliation. In the

child welfare system, the Métis negotiated an approach to the devolution of child and family services that builds on these distinct circumstances.

A distinctions-based approach (see Métis Policy framework element) is applied to services provided to Métis children and families.

### ***Culturally Relevant Programming***

Child and family services agencies under the Metis Child and Family Services Authority must be afforded the capacity to deliver comprehensive and culturally relevant child welfare services. These services must be inclusive of support and prevention services as outlined in *Section 19 of The Child and Family Services Authorities Act*, Duties of an Authority: Subject to the regulations, an authority must, in respect of the persons for whom it is responsible to provide services under section 17, (c) “ensure that culturally appropriate standards for services, practices and procedures are developed”.

Ensure that the child and family services agencies under the Metis Child and Family Services Authority have the capacity to develop and deliver comprehensive support and prevention services to Métis children and families in accordance with the Act.

The Metis Child and Family Services Authority maintains a vision of “healthy, vibrant Métis communities built with the strength of our families through love, respect, honour and heritage”. The Authority builds on the capacity of Métis communities to care for and nurture Métis children through culturally relevant, prevention and support based programs and services.

The Metis Child and Family Services Authority must have the resources to ensure support for promoting, strengthening and preserving Métis culture and heritage.

### ***Achieving Autonomy***

To complete the full implementation of the devolution of child and family services as negotiated under the AJI-CWI, the Government of Manitoba must ensure that full autonomy is achieved. Institutional capacity must be developed to ensure that service delivery programs for Métis children and families are developed by the Métis Authority maintaining cultural relevance.

The funding model for Métis child and family services must evolve to a direct transfer of financial resources from the Manitoba Government to the Metis Child and Family Services Authority over the next three years.



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# Appendix A:

## Selected Indicators of Métis Socio-Economic Gaps

	Winnipeg		Manitoba	
	Métis	All Other Residents	Métis	All Other Residents
<b>Family</b>				
Population Under the Age of 20 <sup>1</sup> (population aged 0 to 19 years)	--	--	33.9%	26.4%
Population Under the Age of 16 <sup>1</sup> (population aged 0 to 15 years)	24.8%	17.2%	25.4%	19.1%
Population Under the Age of 26 <sup>1</sup> (population aged 0 to 25 years)	40.8%	30.7%	--	--
Population Over the Age of 65 <sup>1</sup>	8.6%	14%	9.1%	13.9%
Teen Pregnancy Rate <sup>1</sup> (females aged 15–19, per 1,000)	81.0	43.1	70.2	46.4
Children Raised by Young Mothers <sup>2</sup> (children with mothers aged 15 to 24 years)	--	--	22%	8%
Children Raised in Single Parent Families <sup>2</sup> (children living in single parent families)	--	--	30%	13%
Children in the Care of Child and Family Services <sup>1</sup> (prevalence of children in care)	5.5%	3.2%	4.1%	3.3%
<b>Health</b>				
Premature Mortality Rate <sup>1</sup> (per 1,000)	4.2	3.3	4.0	3.3
Prevalence of Cumulative Mental Illness <sup>1</sup>	32.7%	27.5%	28.4%	25.9%
Prevalence of Depression <sup>1</sup>	25.5%	21.7%	22.0%	20.4%
Prevalence of Substance Abuse <sup>1</sup>	8.1%	4.8%	7.2%	4.9%
Suicide and Suicide Attempt Prevalence <sup>1</sup>	0.10%	0.06%	0.11%	0.08%
<b>Education</b>				
Secondary School Completion <sup>1</sup> (six years after grade nine)	63.2%	79.6%	66.2%	78.4%
Grade 12 Pass Rates <sup>1</sup> (standard tests)	46.2%	64.2%	46.5%	58.1%
Retention Rates from Kindergarten to Grade 8 <sup>1</sup> (students who have not acquired the minimum outcomes to proceed to the next grade level)	3.7%	1.9%	4.6%	2.8%
Post-Secondary Education <sup>2</sup> (population aged 25 to 64 years who have completed some post-secondary school)	--	--	45%	57%
<b>Employment</b>				
Labour Force Participation <sup>2</sup> (participation rate, population aged 15 to 64 years)	--	--	71%	69%
Unemployment <sup>2</sup> (unemployment rate, population aged 15 to 64 years)	--	--	9%	4%
Employment Insurance - Families <sup>1</sup> (children in families receiving provincial EI)	32.0%	16.8%	28.5%	13.1%
Employment Insurance - Youth Adults <sup>1</sup> (population aged 18 to 19 years receiving provincial EI)	24.3%	12.4%	21.1%	9.8%
<b>Housing</b>				
Overspending on Shelter <sup>2</sup> (households spending more than 30 % of income on shelter)	--	--	23%	11%
Substandard Housing <sup>2</sup> (households living in housing in need of major repair)	--	--	16%	8%
Home Ownership <sup>2</sup> (households living in homes that they own)	--	--	56%	82%

<sup>1</sup> Martens, P., Bartlett, J., Burland, E., Prior, H., Burchill, C., Huq, S., Romphf, L., Sanguins, J., Carter, S., & Bailly, A. (2007). Profile of Métis Health Status and Healthcare Utilization in Manitoba: A Population-Based Study. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Métis Policy Committee. (2010). What we heard about the Manitoba Métis Policy, Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.