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Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal Policy Research

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Workshop Summary Report

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
The Workshop in Brief	4
Executive Summary	4
Opening.....	6
Session1: Foundations.....	6
“Urbanization and Migration Patterns of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review (1951-2006)”, Mary Jane Norris, Consultant and Stewart Clatworthy, Four Directions Consulting.....	6
“Urban Aboriginal Voices: A Landmark Study of Canada’s Urban Aboriginal Peoples”, Ginger Gosnell-Myers and Sonya Kunkel, Environics Research Group	7
Foundations Session Questions:	8
Session 2: Identities, Institutions and Conflict.....	9
““I’m sweating with Cree culture not Saulteaux culture and there goes the beginning of Pan-Indianism”: Perspectives on Urban Aboriginal Identities in Canadian Research”, Dr. Evelyn Peters, University of Saskatchewan	9
“The Emerging Urban Aboriginal Institutional Landscape”, David Newhouse, Trent University	10
“Finding Your Allies Where You Can: How Canadian Courts Drive Aboriginal Policy in Canada”, Ian Peach, Consultant.....	11
Identities, Institutions and Conflict Session Questions:.....	12
Aboriginal policy studies unveiling.....	13
Session 3: Pressing Issues.....	13
“A House of Cards: An Initial Exploration of the Patchwork and Delivery System of Housing in Manitoba”, Jino Distasio	13
“Women and Aboriginal Civil Society in Québec: New Challenges”, Carole Lévesque, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS).....	14
“Funding and Ethics in Aboriginal Community Based Research: The Complication of a Contemporary Context”, Chris Andersen, Mike Evans, Devin Dietrich with Carrie Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal Policy Research	2

Bourassa, Jody Hughes, Tricia Logan and Caroline Tait	16
Pressing Issues Session Questions:	17
Session 4: Economic Development, Self-Government and Future Policy Pressures	17
“Seeing like a Circle: Perspectives on the Field from a Dialogue on Urban Aboriginal Economic Development”, Charles Horn.....	17
“Urban Aboriginal Self-Governance in the Wake of the Conservative Party’s Acceptance of the UNDRIP: Some Preliminary Insights”, Yale Belanger	18
“What Now? Pressures on the Federal Role”, Katherine Graham and Frances Abele. 19	
Economic Development, Self-government and Future Policy Pressures Session	
Questions:	20
Ellen Gabriel: Summary of Talks.....	21
Conclusion	22

Introduction

The Workshop in Brief

The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Native Studies, the University of Alberta and the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians jointly hosted this event devoted to dialogue on the current state of policy research on Métis, Non-Status Indian and urban Aboriginal people. The workshop was meant to facilitate two main goals:

- 1) To explore in greater depth issues raised by scholarly research pertaining to Non-Status Indian, Métis and urban Aboriginal issues from policy-relevant perspectives;
- 2) To provide attending scholars, community members and policy-makers with a sense of issues relevant to Métis, Non-Status Indian and urban Aboriginal peoples.

The workshop was open to the public and, including presenters, moderators and elders, more than one hundred people attended the morning sessions and about seventy people attended the afternoon sessions. Each session (four in total) included presentations by prominent scholars and practitioners in the field and was followed by a discussion among presenters and attendees. The event also launched *aboriginal policy studies*, a new scholarly, peer-reviewed journal published out of the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. The publication is set to release its inaugural issue in the fall of 2010. Dr. Chris Andersen and Ms. Ellen Gabriel moderated the session. Pam Quart and Meika Taylor took notes.

The workshop lasted from 8:30am to 4:15pm, included two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon.

Executive Summary

Since the 1950s, the Aboriginal peoples of Canada have become increasingly urban. Originally the result of migration from reserves, urbanization has increasingly become the result of “ethnic mobility” and natural increase within cities. Urban Aboriginal populations now comprise roughly half of all Aboriginal people in Canada today, in particular Non-Status Indian and Métis populations (who are roughly 75% and 69% urban, respectively). These demographic facts raise a host of policy issues that, for the most part, neither scholarship nor policy-makers have adequately addressed. Indeed, all presenters offered opinions on the inadequacy of both scholarship and existing policy in coming to terms with the current complexity of urban Aboriginal experiences.

The workshop focused on moving away from the negative socio-demographic trends and reactive, “deficit-based” policy-making that have characterized past policy attempts to come to terms with the urban Aboriginal population. While presenters were careful not to make light of the difficult situations faced by the urban Aboriginal population, they also compellingly argued that urban Aboriginal peoples’ experiences are increasingly diverse and cannot be explained by existing theorizing. The specific point made by several presenters, in fact, was in regards to a growing middle-class segment of the population, whose distinctive lifestyles and experiences remain out of step with both policy making and academic literature.

Legal and individual identities remained a common thread throughout the various workshop presentations. Changes to the ways that governments have defined legal statuses over time have intergenerationally affected identifications and the rights individuals have (and feel) legally entitled to. Various court decisions have been undertaken in light of these feelings of disconnectedness from their Aboriginal rights and communities. Individually, urban Aboriginal peoples are creating distinct identities for themselves in urban areas and in particular, many urban Aboriginal people continue to embrace and access culture and ceremony within their city of residence.

Governments still seem ill prepared to create distinctive, positive policy for urban Aboriginal peoples and, in many ways, have failed to recognize the unique situation of urban Aboriginal peoples either in terms of their distinct needs or the city-specific distinctiveness of their community(s) (either demographically or in terms of the city’s policy history). While researchers are getting better at highlighting and adjusting to this fact, government policy has been less responsive. This is unsurprising, given the extent to which government policy makers rely on the evidence just now being gathered by academic scholars.

In all of these matters, researchers expressed that Aboriginal peoples need to be front and centre in these processes. More specifically, several presenters made the point that while researchers and governments are engaging with Aboriginal communities, they must also be prepared to engage with indigenous knowledge and theories as a way to work through existing and future challenges. Indigenous knowledge looks towards achieving balance and wellness to move towards better lives for Aboriginal peoples such that they can be more proactive than Canadian systems.

Research ethics was another key issue highlighted: how can researchers apply Tri-council research ethics to urban and Métis communities in ways that account fairly for their less obvious representative and infrastructural dimensions? Ultimately, Aboriginal peoples and communities need to take the lead in defining the contours of their engagement and negotiation projects that involve them. Such engagement was presented as an important theme of governance and though governments have recognized the principle of self-government, they have done little to mobilize or concretize it. Discussions about institutional infrastructure were interwoven with talks of governance. In particular, presenters emphasized concerns about organizations lacking the capacity to carry out such a diverse body of programming, support, and services. Further institutional

development needs to take place, particularly in terms of governance, education and economic development. Presently, social service organizations often attempt to address many of these issues, and they need to be able to focus on the services they were designed to offer.

The day's presentations and discussions covered a wide range of topics concerning the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including demographics, socio-economic factors, research ethics, identities, governance, organizations, the courts and how urban Aboriginal peoples negotiate these issues. At the end of the day, many more issues require exploration and existing policy has a lot of room for improvement, but neither of these points will be successful for urban Aboriginal peoples unless *they* guide the process by using their knowledge and expertise as a way to inform the way forward.

Opening

Dr. Chris Andersen of the University of Alberta, Faculty of Native Studies and editor of aboriginal policy studies began the day. He introduced Elder John Cree, who opened the event with a prayer. Jean-Marc Mangin, Executive Director of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences provided opening remarks.

Session1: Foundations

“Urbanization and Migration Patterns of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review (1951-2006)”, Mary Jane Norris, Consultant and Stewart Clatworthy, Four Directions Consulting

Norris's presentation highlighted both the phenomenal increases of urban Aboriginal populations and their distinctive migration patterns. From only several hundred urban Aboriginal residents in 1951, twelve urban centres had over 1000 Indian residents, and over 2000 Indian residents in seven of these cities (Stanbury, 1974, based on Statistics Canada Perspective) by 1971. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s urban Aboriginal populations continued to grow, particularly in the prairie cities, and this rate continued from 1981 to 2001 where the Aboriginal population doubled in many Canadian CMAs and in some cities, such as Saskatoon, where it quadrupled (Siggner and Costa, 2005). Exceptional growth of the Aboriginal identity population was experienced between 1986 and 1991, particularly in urban areas (Guimond, 2003), which Norris suggests is largely attributable to "ethnic mobility". Norris also emphasized the city- and "identity"-specific character of these trends. Non-Status and Métis populations were more urbanized than status Indians and urbanization trends varied by city.

Migration factored greatly in Aboriginal urbanization, particularly in the beginning of the urbanization trend (much less so during the 1986-2006 period). Aboriginal populations in general are more likely than non-Aboriginals to move, especially in urban areas, both from reserves to cities, from city to city and within single cities. Norris noted that Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal

migration is a reciprocal process where reserves act as both origins and destinations and serve to increase the “churn” to and from cities, though she suggests that the latest data indicates that the high mobility of Aboriginal populations may be starting to lessen and instead, natural increase and ethnic mobility represent the main contributor to the growth of the urban Aboriginal population. These demographic dynamics vary greatly by city.

While net migration effects are small, changing compositional effects of migration on age-gender could affect urban growth through natural increase. Prior to the 1985 revisions of the *Indian Act*, more women characterized out-flow of migrants from reserves to cities. Originally leading to a gender imbalance, this has since been reduced. The inflow of youth and young adult Aboriginal migrants, both men and women, to cities can contribute to natural increase as a growth factor in urban areas.

Norris suggests that the recent change in the mobility of the Aboriginal population suggests eventual convergence towards non-Aboriginal rates; may reflect greater residential establishment and stability of Aboriginal populations in urban areas. Longer established urban Aboriginal populations are more likely to have developed their own institutional structures and completeness and in turn, this impacts on changing ties and reduced migration back to home communities. Policy makers need to support the continued institutional development for these populations.

Policy recommendation: Norris demonstrated that each city has its own demographic story. For example, while natural increase represents a major contributor to the urban Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, ethnic mobility plays a more powerful role in Toronto. As such, effective policy and programming must address the needs of each specific urban area. Likewise, researchers must focus more specifically on understanding and documenting the demographic and policy distinctiveness of urban Aboriginal communities by urban area.

“Urban Aboriginal Voices: A Landmark Study of Canada’s Urban Aboriginal Peoples”, Ginger Gosnell-Myers and Sonya Kunkel, Environics Research Group

Environics undertook the 2006 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax. The study had four major objectives: to understand the experiences, identities, values and aspirations of urban Aboriginal peoples; to use survey research to give a voice to good news, positive narratives and hopeful scenarios for the future to counter the negative discourse often associated with urban Aboriginal peoples; to provide new insights that help reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal peoples; and to build capacity to support further research and understanding of Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities.

Methodology: The research project utilized an advisory circle of Aboriginal guides and experts, a largely Aboriginal research team and the expertise and experience of a number

of urban Aboriginal community collaborators and organizations. They used the 2006 Census stats to establish quotas in cities based on demographic categories of age, gender, identity group and education as a method for determining their sample characteristics. Likewise, they employed a range of methods, including snowball sampling, in-person interviews, and telephone and in person surveys in the collection of their data.

Environics research found that like other Canadians, urban Aboriginal peoples want a “good life” and that they desire to be successful in mainstream ways. The research drew out indicators of happiness as seen by urban Aboriginal peoples and categorized them into six areas, including: socio-economic stability; access to elders and traditional practices; the ability to persevere through their problems; health status; urban connection; and Aboriginal identity.

Another key finding of the research was that Aboriginal peoples are not rooted in remote communities in that most feel their city residence to be “home”. Many reported strong pride in their city, and maintained a strong sense of cultural vitality. Respondents believe that Aboriginal culture has experienced dramatic growth in cities and perhaps most importantly, felt like they could make a positive contribution to their city. This remained the case despite the fact that most respondents felt they were negatively perceived by non-Aboriginal peoples.

Policy recommendation: The goals and aspirations of urban Aboriginal peoples are similar to those of mainstream urban Canadians, though the strategies and tools that Aboriginal peoples want to use to get to these goals may be different. Public education is crucial to highlighting the achievements of urban Aboriginal peoples, and an Aboriginal historical context is important for understanding the growth of Canada’s urban areas.

Foundations Session Questions:

The Environics presenters were asked to elaborate on how they dealt with the ethics questions and if the initial research project came at the request of the Aboriginal community. They responded that the research came from conversations with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples expressing a need for this research. In terms of ethics, they partnered with a number of universities, and submitted their research proposal to the various ethics processes of those institutions. They abided by all Canadian federal Tri-Council research standards.

Norris was asked whether the 2001 and 2006 censuses revealed any surprising differences. She replied that they were remarkably consistent. Migration, for example, has been fairly consistent in terms of loss and gain. For all Aboriginal groups, the past three censuses reveal a certain amount of convergence and some dampening of the migration effects. A follow up question asked if the birth rate was falling: Norris responded that although fertility rates tend to be lower in urban areas, they are still higher than the non-Aboriginal population, though this issue was not specifically explored.

A further question asked about the mobility of people and why they move. Norris replied that movement has always taken place in both directions, but there has always been a net outflow. She continued by explaining that family and housing are the top reasons for moving and that depending on the direction of movement, employment and education are also key factors. Ms. Kunkel, the Environics speaker, suggested that their own research similarly positioned education, family, housing and employment as major contributors of movement.

A question was asked about whether or not there is an accurate accounting of Métis populations in the Census from 1951. Dr. Norris responded that 1951 made no distinction between identity groups, but she believes that in 1981 Métis was added as a group.

A final question asked whether or not the Environics study is representative of the overall Aboriginal population. They responded that because it isn't random survey we can't make representative statements though responses were weighted based on the 2006 census to make it as representative as possible.

Session 2: Identities, Institutions and Conflict

“‘I’m sweating with Cree culture not Saulteaux culture and there goes the beginning of Pan-Indianism’’: Perspectives on Urban Aboriginal Identities in Canadian Research”, Dr. Evelyn Peters, University of Saskatchewan

Dr. Peters discussed changes in the literature since 1996, when Aboriginal peoples' cultures were viewed in terms of poverty and dysfunction and in terms of their incompatibility with urban life. Recent research has shifted perspectives about urban Aboriginal cultures among scholars and, to a lesser extent, among policy makers. Further research investigating urban Aboriginal identities is important for a host of policy-relevant issues, including: program design and delivery; demographic indicators, self-government and representation; identifying barriers and facilitators; as well as for the need to recognize the contribution that Aboriginal peoples make in creating vibrant cities.

Dr. Peters argued that Canada's colonial legacy produced two major, multi-faceted implications: dispossession/displacement and marginalization. These legacies have negatively impacted policy for urban Aboriginal peoples, particularly with respect to a now-intergenerational lack of formal relationship with the federal government (until 2003). However, she argued that positive Aboriginal identities are evident in urban areas: identities that differ from mainstream Canadians and differ from (although remain connected to) those of non-urban Aboriginal peoples.

Dr. Peters targeted a number of areas for further research, including: engagement with a broader range of theoretical perspectives; interconnection of different facets of identity; the impact of legal definitions; exploration of Aboriginal diversity; pan-Aboriginal vs.

particular cultural practices; particular urban histories; gangs and Aboriginal cultural identities; and negotiating “mixed” ancestry, particularly in the West.

Finally, Dr. Peters highlighted how issues of urban Aboriginal identities constituted important sectors for public policy decisions. Despite the growth of available material about Aboriginal experiences and histories generally, very little public knowledge shows how Aboriginal people define their cultural identities in cities. Peters states these issues are important to the development of public policy because they contribute to greater or more complex understanding of urban Aboriginal people among non-Aboriginal residents, many of whom still view Aboriginal peoples and issues as peripheral to what makes our cities work. The focus on strategies, resilience and citizenship in research on Aboriginal identities challenges dominant “deficit” perspectives that view urban Aboriginal people mainly as poor and marginalized, and can contribute to perspectives that emphasize the contribution of urban Aboriginal people to culturally diverse and vibrant cities.

Policy recommendation: Increased recognition of the Aboriginal contributions to Canada’s urban landscape. Governments need to use research on urban Aboriginal identities to develop appropriate and effective policy for urban self-government, program and services definitions, process contributing to recent population increases and factors that support or erode Aboriginal identities in cities.

“The Emerging Urban Aboriginal Institutional Landscape”, David Newhouse, Trent University

Professor Newhouse discussed the changes and emergence of distinct urban Aboriginal communities since the 1960s. Landscapes, conceptualized terms of place and entities, undergo continual change and the relationship between institutions and landscapes remains reflexive. The urban Aboriginal landscape needs to be thought of in broad terms first. Indigenous theory and knowledge in the city need to be acknowledged as a way to understand the city and the urban experience. Does it make sense to talk about urban Aboriginal landscapes in terms of individuals, institutions and organizations? Can indigenous knowledge or indigenous thought be used to think about and affect public policy questions? In order to explore these questions Professor Newhouse utilized a Medicine Wheel Analysis and its linkages to social theory. The Medicine Wheel postulates a state of ‘wellness’; an ideal to be pursued; a good life, or bimaadiziwin. Newhouse characterized policy as a social diagnosis that examines problems and then explores ways to a desired outcome. He argues that indigenous knowledge similarly emphasizes wellness and balance and offers prescriptions for how to move towards better lives of Aboriginal peoples.

Newhouse pointed out four different kinds of urban Aboriginal organizations: 1. physical (health, employment, housing, business); 2. cultural and mental (education, language, powwow); 3. social and political (political representation, sports and recreation); 4. spiritual and art (elders, church theatre). On the edges are relationship organizations that build and maintain relations among groups and with outsiders: friendship centers are

Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal 10
Policy Research

examples of these types of organizations. He noted the fragility of the existing state of the urban Aboriginal infrastructure. Through the lens of indigenous knowledge and its approaches to development, policy-makers must inquire whether these represent appropriate institutions. Policy-makers must remember that Indigenous peoples want to use their own ideas to work through their lives, and that they use multi-dimensional ways to achieve their good life, or bimaadiziwin.

Newhouse points out that the Environics study found that, like mainstream Canadians, urban Aboriginal people aspired to live a good life and be happy. He argues that the idea of happiness is important to public policy and while it represents a central tenet of the North American dream, it remains under-explored. For urban Aboriginal peoples, the study by Environics found that happiness included hopes for the future of education, connection, and racism- discrimination-free environments. Cultural revitalization and participation in cultural activities were also deemed important. Given this set of aspirations, the institutional area in need of the most work is education: in particular, more Aboriginal education institutions are needed at all levels and this should constitute a major public policy concern. Education can foster improvements in families, health, incomes and a better life in general. Based on this understanding Professor Newhouse asserted a need to ask questions through the lens of indigenous knowledge, whether or not we ended up with the same answers as those found through mainstream lenses: is the complexity of organizations appropriate for the task at hand? Is the institutional balance correct? What needs to be strengthened? What is missing? How can we further develop these ideas?

Policy recommendation: The idea of “the good life” from Indigenous perspectives needs to be introduced into the public policy arena. Policy-makers must inquire about how we can foster individuals, families and organizations that facilitate the ability for urban Aboriginal residents to live a good life. Also, more attention needs to be paid to the Aboriginal middle class, in terms of how needs not based on poor socio-economic status can be conceived and met.

“Finding Your Allies Where You Can: How Canadian Courts Drive Aboriginal Policy in Canada”, Ian Peach, Consultant

Mr. Peach explained that the current process of rights adjudication for most Canadians is one in which governments respond to the decisions of the courts. For Aboriginal peoples, conversely, rights operate in a proactive way, addressing issues prior to the need for the courts. Aboriginal litigations act as a result of government inaction, rather than action. While the litigation process has been unevenly advantageous for Aboriginal peoples, we must still ask: is it the most efficient and just process for achieving equitable policy outcomes? It is a slow, costly, process of achieving recognition though courts and governments need to consider if this is the best way to drive Aboriginal policy.

Various Aboriginal groups in Canada have effectively utilized the courts, in particular off-reserve First Nations members. As a result of *Corbiere vs. Canada (1999)*, off-reserve band members now have rights to political self-determination (the right to vote on Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal 11 Policy Research

First Nations governments), a decision that challenged the *Indian Act's* discriminatory provisions around residency. However, while this was a win for off-reserve band members, they are yet to receive the same access to services as on-reserve members.

Peach argues that the inconsistency of court decisions points to a shortcoming of court-driven policy. He says that courts are charged with “particular” cases and, as a result, changes are incremental and often inconsistent, and can be affected by particular situations that guide policy development. This can be highly problematic because the court case may not be representative of the larger issues that policy is attempting to address yet its narrow logics are nonetheless incorporated into larger policy spheres.

Individuals denied Indian status under the *Indian Act* have also used the courts to influence policy. Bill C-31 and the subsequent Bill C-3 provide clear examples of how court-driven policy is as reactionary as it is proactive. Though the *Indian Act's* sex discrimination has now been addressed twice, discrimination continues to exist inasmuch as the 6(2) section of Bill C-31 remains in effect. So, while these “victories” are arguably positive, their incremental nature makes celebration in any complete sense difficult (and raises the problem addressed above about narrow fact situations before the courts effectively shaping broad policy spheres).

Through *R. v. Powley* (2003), Métis litigants have used courts as a way to effectively advance their rights. This case advanced the participation of Métis in consultations, and represented a step forward in defining Métis rights. As a result, government has worked to engage Métis communities in the formulation of federal policies for Métis peoples.

Peach concluded his presentation by posing a question about whether litigation-driven Aboriginal policy was sufficient to producing just relations between Aboriginal and Canadian governments. He argued that we must remember that for Aboriginal communities the legal process is a hard one that can create or aggravate divisions within communities, is costly, problematic and fails to provide any guarantees about the outcome or the eventual policies. He states that to do justice, Aboriginal rights must be respected in broader ways that don't require overt and fact-specific legal processes like those that characterize the courts.

Policy recommendation: Policy-makers must create more efficient policies that avoid court processes. Governments must view litigation-produced policy change with an eye towards looking at the policy they are creating in terms greater than the singular case and specific fact issues being addressed in a court context.

Identities, Institutions and Conflict Session Questions:

A question was asked about the idea of “a good life” and whether or not it means the same thing to everyone, which is about much more than prosperity in an Anishnaabeg sense? Professor Newhouse responded that there is a sense of prosperity, but also having other aspects of the other four quadrants, you must have balance too. There is an emerging urban Aboriginal middle class; this topic needs a great deal of exploration, Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal 12 Policy Research

especially in terms of public policy. Before we can talk about public policy we need to ensure that we are talking about the same things, and that we are working to help individuals achieve their good life. A follow-up question asked about the links between Aristotle and the IK definition of a “good life”. David responded that philosophical Indigenous traditions discuss “the good life” in terms similar to Aristotle.

Policy change stems from public pressure in Canadian traditions and in Aboriginal traditions it seems to come from an attempt to address the needs of the community: how can these two perspectives be reconciled? Mr. Peach responded that he is not sure; all he can do is seek opportunities to argue for respectfully negotiated solutions whenever he can. Aboriginal peoples need to decide how to respond to this and as such, he can only be ready to serve and respond as thoughtfully as possible.

Elder Cree reminds us that the concept of the “good life” means different things to different individuals. He explained, for example, that he would consider himself as living a “good life” despite the amount of hardship he and his family experienced: they didn’t have much money, but they had enough to raise their kids and that was important to him and his wife.

Aboriginal policy studies unveiling

Dr. Chris Andersen, *aboriginal policy studies* editor, unveiled the new journal and talked about the types of issues the journal hopes to cover. Nathalie Kermoal, Associate Dean-Academic, Faculty of Native Studies; Associate Professor Campus St.Jean, brought further greetings from the University of Alberta, congratulating Chris on the launch of the journal. Finally Fred Caron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, INAC, expressed his greetings, and the Office’s commitment to the journal.

Session 3: Pressing Issues

“A House of Cards: An Initial Exploration of the Patchwork and Delivery System of Housing in Manitoba”, Jino Distasio

Dr. Distasio began by explaining his title change: when he began to look at housing in Manitoba, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, it was like a house of cards because of all the complexities and many pieces required to ensure success in housing programs. Removing a single piece risks destroying the entire construction. His current research began with a question about the current method and status of the delivery of housing to Manitoba’s Aboriginal community and evolved into looking at the dynamic interplay between the various community-based organizations developing housing and the means by which they navigated the complicated and often muddy policy and program waters. As

well, they were interested in how staff from various organizations provided supplementary support to persons and families in need, particularly informal networks of support.

He then moved on to discuss the importance of factoring in the mobility of the Aboriginal population. Traditional models of migration say that the rural-urban movement is primarily attributed to employment issues, but the high rates of migration and residential mobility of the Aboriginal population cannot be accounted for by economic motivations alone. He stated further that issues of Aboriginal mobility do not simply lay in the redistribution of the population, but rather, in the residential churn that frequently occurs between reserves and cities and within cities, both of which can place strain on the housing market. The Australian literature recognizes a circular movement, which is seen as essential to remain connected to traditional homelands. The term “spiritual homelessness” represents separation from traditional homelands. He says that people move back to their home communities when they can’t find employment, housing or otherwise adjust to the city, for the cultural familiarity and the stability and support provided by family and extended kinship networks outside of the city.

Distasio then discussed Winnipeg in particular. The Aboriginal population now comprises about 10% of its total population. The Aboriginal population in the city is also aging and this population segment has specific housing needs that are not adequately being met. More specifically, the housing stock in Winnipeg is in need of major reinvestment. Perhaps the most pressing concern, however, is the loss of housing agreements, which does not receive enough public policy attention but could potentially prove disastrous for Aboriginal housing organizations. The general housing market in Winnipeg is also increasing which results in less attainable home ownership, rising rental rates and a low vacancy rate.

The urban Aboriginal community in Winnipeg has been responsive. It is home to the oldest Native housing organization in the country, in operation for forty years. However, much work still needs to be done, and the housing situation in Winnipeg is becoming critical. Next steps in Distasio’s research are to continue an exploration of the resourcefulness of community organizations and staff who deal with program, policies and the real world needs of families and individuals.

Policy recommendation: The direst issue in terms of housing in the ending of service agreements with housing organizations. Governments need to consider the ramifications that the end of these agreements will bring to the urban Aboriginal population and the housing organizations that work to meet their needs. Additionally, policy must begin to address the distinct needs of an aging urban Aboriginal population.

“Women and Aboriginal Civil Society in Québec: New Challenges”, Carole Lévesque, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)

Dr. Lévesque’s talk concerned one of the key questions emerging about Aboriginal Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal 14 Policy Research

people in Québec cities, namely, the creation and development of an Aboriginal civil society. This research is undertaken by ODENA, a joint initiative of the DIALOG Research and Knowledge Network Relating to Aboriginal Peoples and the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ, or Association of Québec Native Friendship Centres).

Newhouse argued in 2002 that the time had come for researchers to rethink the question of Aboriginal people in urban areas, which has for too long been seen as both negative and in opposition to life on the reserves or other non-urban communities. Today, urban Aboriginal people are collectively involved in a process of affirmation and redefinition of their relations with the city and are seeking ways of ensuring that their legitimate place is recognized. A new urban Aboriginal culture is emerging, reflecting the new Aboriginal modernity in the process of being created across Canada (Newhouse, 2008).

Early friendship centres in Québec served as service “jumping off points” for those who left their home communities, but they have since become places of action, places for strong women and places for solidarity that are vital to Aboriginal people in urban areas. Their roles are multifaceted, with areas of intervention that include housing, health, education, poverty, even assistance with homework and support for elders. Friendship Centres are more in tune with the needs of urban Aboriginal peoples and how to go about successfully meeting them. Are Native friendship centres thus exerting a form of “counter-power” in the urban space? For the moment, the question remains an open one. What is clearly evident, however, is the existence of an emerging Aboriginal “social capital” in the midst of rapid change, and the putting into action of new democratic practices.

Dr. Lévesque argued that identities are key to explore. For an Aboriginal civil society to position itself as such, it must in fact exert a power of attraction, in terms of identity, for people. In return, its individual and collective manifestations of identity will contribute to its maintenance, strengthening, effectiveness and renewal insofar as identity represents a motivator of action and choice.

In the Aboriginal context, one’s family, community (reserve), territory and First Nations are relatively well-known and recognized spheres of belonging. Added to this is a certain idea of a global Aboriginal world, termed “Autochtonie”, that refers more to a place, a space, an intangible and virtual territory. Lévesque argues that roughly translated into English, “Aboriginal world” is closer to the idea of “Autochtonie”.

The questions research groups face include: what values and reference points will a collective Aboriginal civil society share? What meaning will be given to people’s actions, interventions and demands? Will they call for a new form of citizenship? She didn’t express answers, just questions, and positioned these as being of primary importance in research: the capacity to ask questions and not necessarily the interest of coming up with answers.

Policy recommendation: Effective policy-making must come to terms with the distinctive emergence of a new urban Aboriginal civil society – coming to grips with this social fact will require further research and consultation. Policy-makers need to support urban Aboriginal peoples in creating their own Aboriginal civil society as they define their values, reference points, and how they wish to take action.

“Funding and Ethics in Aboriginal Community Based Research: The Complication of a Contemporary Context”, Chris Andersen, Mike Evans, Devin Dietrich with Carrie Bourassa, Jody Hughes, Tricia Logan and Caroline Tait

Dr. Evans discussed the complications of applying ethical guidelines to Métis communities and the possible effects of the new Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) guidelines that mandate the inclusion of Aboriginal communities in all research processes (December 2008). Though these guidelines came from good beginnings - decolonization of research via Indigenous methodologies – they possess two major flaws that affect Métis communities in particular. First, they assume a level of institutional infrastructure not present in many Métis communities; and second, they assume a “landedness” to community (a geographical boundedness) which, although conceptually convenient, does not typify Métis communities.

In general, Métis research in social and health related sciences is minimal. CIHR funding for Métis health research ranges between 2-8 % of the total research relating to Aboriginal communities. These communities’ lack of infrastructure more specifically manifests itself in absences of community health care structures and other types of institutional partners with whom to partner. Aboriginal communities are most easily recognizable in a rural or reserve context (though this is a changing reality for many Aboriginal peoples) in terms of one community equaling one place/local; but such community formations are relatively new for the Métis and defining community has always constituted a complicated issue.

The reality of Métis communities is that they are and have always been mobile; interwoven in place with other communities and with their institutions; and complexly multi-local. They are linked and possess overlapping institutions with those of traditional territory holders that often produce complex and fluid political contexts. Researchers often look for research partnerships with communities possessing the most identifiable infrastructure: these are often positioned as gateways to the entire community of a specific city, but such methodologies may lead researchers to miss out on many organizations.

To conclude, Dr. Evans emphasized the fact that community matters: multiple definitions of communities result in varying responses to the ethics process, and the nature of Métis communities demands a more nuanced approach to the term Métis.

Policy recommendation: Research ethics and response infrastructure need to be developed in the communities themselves – not just in universities. For Métis communities, part of a template must acknowledge (so as not to marginalize) their dispersed and multilocal character.

Pressing Issues Session Questions:

The question section began with a question about how researchers define “community” and how we can respond to specific needs to help the development of these communities to improve identities – are academics providing critical analysis? Dr. Evans responded by arguing that the values of fundamental research and complexity are not something that the community needs or does not need: the issue is instead that communities need everything because their capacity to do research on their own is often very limited. Research with Aboriginal communities needs to be responsive to the Aboriginal communities needs/wants.

A second question asked whether the control of Aboriginal communities proposed in the research constituted a form of censorship. Dr. Distasio responded by suggesting community involvement led to better research. That is that relationships with community organizations produce better answers, especially in situations where the researcher holds partnerships with and cedes ownership of the research to the community: this isn’t censorship. Another audience member commented that 90% of our research comes as a result of community priorities, and thus while challenges accompany these priorities, these kinds of research relations are important and necessary and, as such, should not be seen as censorship.

A final question asked how to address resistance to an Aboriginal housing project for students. Dr. Distasio replied that one must keep pushing and people need to see the broader implications of housing for students in a growing city as being something positive for the future.

Session 4: Economic Development, Self-Government and Future Policy Pressures

“Seeing like a Circle: Perspectives on the Field from a Dialogue on Urban Aboriginal Economic Development”, Charles Horn

Horn is a part of the Urban Aboriginal Economic Development Network, a project-based partnership between academics, community members and policy-makers geared towards improving our understandings of how people mobilize knowledge. They are looking at what unique and specialized knowledge participants hold when they engage in these conversations (whether or not this knowledge is recognized in mainstream society). He states that knowledge can be both enabling and inhibiting: enabling because it is a

resource, inhibiting because it limits the political imaginary.

He notes that the socio-demographic situation and institutions of urban Aboriginal peoples are often the precursor to this type of discussion. Horn argues that institutional fabric is important to aiding economic development. We need to understand the difference and relationships between an urban community and a land based community and how the movement of people impacts economic development. This relationship ties into personal identities. Interestingly, Horn argued identities offered essential resources for new entrepreneurs to draw upon from the larger community.

Existing urban Aboriginal policy in general and economic development policy in particular are inadequate. However, defining adequate policy can be difficult. This research project intends to add to the discussion about what effective policy might look like.

Researchers and practitioners of economic development face a number of hurdles. Although a dense and rich literature is available on socio-economic issues, little of this information is relevant to practitioners. The level of bureaucratization is also challenging. As it currently stands, no effective policy exists for dealing with strategies on how to approach urban Aboriginal economic development. In addition, urban Aboriginal organizations are typically caught up in service delivery and simply don't possess the expertise or resources to take on economic development issues. The ability to generate organizations that can look at bigger-picture ideas about how to address urban economic development will be key. Policy-makers need to think outside the box of social service delivery in order to allow this capacity to exist.

Policy recommendation: Policy-makers need to develop a strategy for urban Aboriginal economic development. Support for entrepreneurs needs to be put in place to aid the success of new projects. An infrastructure in the city needs to be developed that goes beyond social service delivery organizations. Likewise, policy-making must be creative in ensuring the needs of this emerging entrepreneurial population are met, by keeping in mind their specific needs and aspirations, some of which may differ in many ways from the mainstream, while others remain similar.

“Urban Aboriginal Self-Governance in the Wake of the Conservative Party’s Acceptance of the UNDRIP: Some Preliminary Insights”, Yale Belanger

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) crystallized the rights of Indigenous peoples in international law. Although it has not yet ratified them, Canada has previously signed various UN declarations acknowledging forms of Indigenous self-determination. Both Canadian courts and UNDRIP recognize urban Aboriginal communities but policy-makers must determine how such changes to legal and institutional frameworks will impact urban Aboriginal self-determination.

A legal setting for urban Aboriginal communities is growing substantially, as exhibited in *Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal* 18 Policy Research

Misquadis (2002), *Corbier* (1999) and *Esquega* (2007). These cases have recognized their political character and likewise, off-reserve band members can vote in *Indian Act* elections and referendums while on-reserve residence is no longer a requirement for band councillorship. UNDRIP sites of influence on this matter include: collective and individual citizenship decisions; the urban Aboriginal community is self-determining and they have rights to development.

For communities, UNDRIP offers a means of filling the policy void concerning federal and/or provincial responsibility for urban Aboriginal peoples. It also means recognition as a self-determining people with the right to development and self-determining bodies. In addition, *Misquadis* (2002) opened the door to financial transfers to urban communities promoting community development.

Dr. Belanger pointed out that UNDRIP and Canadian government perceptions about individual vs. collective rights are potentially in conflict, and Canadian ratification of UNDRIP will require governments to address these tensions. Individual rights could end up being a slippery slope for First Nations claiming cities as traditional lands and urban Aboriginal peoples living in traditional homelands may not be recognized as citizens due to Aboriginal residency. Conversely, however, to declaim responsibility for these populations undermines inclusive sovereignty claims.

By way of offering final thoughts, Dr. Belanger states that UNDRIP applies in Canada by implication of other UN documents Canada has signed. UNDRIP provides urban Aboriginal peoples protective mechanisms to help augment their self-governing authority, as does the *Charter* and several other court decisions. The protections unfortunately pit First Nations against urban Aboriginal communities, and individuals may choose sites of citizenship irrespective of residency. First Nations criteria of customary law that promote a plurality of citizenship based on relational citizenship models are ignored; and the UNDRIP and Canada's courts inform how First Nations determine membership. In addition, urban peoples are voters with concomitant rights to community resources. At the end of the day, the combination of Canadian case law, individual *Charter* protections and the UNDRIPs guidelines may equal individual urban Indigenous rights trumping First Nations collective rights.

Policy recommendations: Formal recognition of the urban Aboriginal community as a community of rights that is organic in its evolution and distinctive in its socio-political and socio-economic needs. Duty to consult must always be embraced. These recommendations are alignment with the UNDRIP provisions. If Canada ratifies the UNDRIP, it must produce an effective plan for its implication and how to address the contradictions between UNDRIP and Canadian laws and policies.

“What Now? Pressures on the Federal Role”, Katherine Graham and Frances Abele

Dr. Abele acknowledged that the role of the federal government in urban Aboriginal policy is questionable, but that it now accepts that it has a distinctive role to play. During *Reframing the Issues: Emerging Questions for Métis, Non-Status Indian and Urban Aboriginal* 19 Policy Research

the 1990s a number of events became key to urban Aboriginal peoples and policy. First, neo-liberalism came to Canada. Second, the Liberal government began to redefine the role of the federal state and devolve the government's role. At the same time, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was operating but urban issues were not central and there was little in ways of addressing urban issues. These ideas were recast as a partnership approach in the policy response to RCAP. Canada also began to experiment with how to bring Aboriginal peoples into the policy process, which formed the pillars of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

The federal role in the cities is now increasingly accepted and this acceptance brings with it issues pertaining to the urban Aboriginal population's tremendous growth. What are the challenges? What do we do now? Three challenges are of particular importance: first, the changing dynamics to do with demographic changes, heterogeneity, intermarriage, differences among actual cities, longer term policies and multidimensional funding needs to be addressed.

Second, the self-government paradigm is important, but it is far from clear what it will or can mean in practice. It is not clear how we get from where we are now (service delivery organization and large urban populations) to the next steps. Is self-government the way to move forward? Is this the end of the period when we realize what it means to recognize self-government?

Third, dealing with jurisdiction issues. While the federal government has responsibility for Indian peoples wherever they are, provincial governments also have fiduciary responsibility. Where does the federal responsibility begin and end and others step in? Is intergovernmental collaboration the way to go (i.e. Winnipeg) and if so, how is this negotiated? Does it require a new federal department to deal only with urban Aboriginal affairs? Does it need a minimalist approach to organizations in the city? These issues are not at all clear and this is part of the existing policy weakness that needs to be worked out. The issue hasn't been thought through. As these issues are worked through two problems come to the fore: first, Canada is ruled by the power of the executive branch at the federal level and second, the deeply entrenched consequences of federalism. This leaves the question of where do the urban Aboriginal peoples "fit"?

Policy recommendation: The federal role in Canadian cities is fundamental and far reaching. Federal policies and expenditures affect most areas of city life, through spending on infrastructure and other items. The federal role in Canadian cities with respect to the interests of Aboriginal people is similarly fundamental, for the reason just mentioned and because federal relations with Aboriginal people extend into social programming, support for political advocacy organizations and other matters. Policy-making must take the multiple dimensions of these relationships into account.

Economic Development, Self-government and Future Policy Pressures

Session Questions:

The question section began with a question about the federal government pushing out “traditional” Aboriginal peoples, resulting in low voter turnout. Elder Cree commented that part of the reason for low voter turnout is due to the fact that traditional forms of government have been pushed out and replaced by *Indian Act* forms. Also, the dynamics of the east and west are different in terms of who did and did not sign treaties. Dr. Belanger responded that he liked UNDRIP because it doesn’t look at treaties, but rights as Indigenous peoples.

A question about how the Aboriginal community is going to deal with the division that could arise from reserve communities, if the federal government takes responsibility for urban Aboriginal peoples. Dr. Abele responded that communities, rather than outsiders, must deal with this issue. Then there is the *Indian Act*, particularly the top down authority; down the road there has to be a grassroots movement to get rid of it. A participant commented on the fuzzy area of self-determination off of traditional lands, in terms of urban communities. Urban peoples shouldn’t infringe on other peoples’ rights (rural rights) but rather we need to look to a new way to negotiate how they will move forward.

An audience member asked a final question about the overlap and conflict between UNDRIP and government policy: how does the government attempt to address this? Dr. Belanger responded that communities must possess the tools to develop the frameworks before the policy frameworks go to Ottawa. The voices aren’t coming through, and this is largely because of the top down approach. How do we rebuild this, decolonize this process? The communities and federal departments need to negotiate this. Once this process is in play we can move forward.

Ellen Gabriel: Summary of Talks

As the day came to a close, Ellen Gabriel provided a summary of the day’s sessions and added her own insights to the issues discussed. She stated that the *Indian Act* constrains Indian peoples, and that the policies and programs under the *Indian Act* have operated to assimilate Indian peoples. The federal government was/is responsible to act honorably on behalf of the Crown, but they have failed miserably and they have failed to act in good faith. She says that support for UNDRIP is very important. UNDRIP can be seen as a modern manifestation of the two-row wampum. Government endorsement of UNDRIP will require implementation discussions.

She then reminded us that “urban Aboriginal peoples” are not a new phenomenon, but that they are still Aboriginal peoples. She points out that she has not observed a difference in Aboriginal peoples urban or non-urban. Like several of the presenters, Ms. Gabriel argued that Aboriginal peoples are in cities as a function of survival, not of assimilation. She positioned many of these issues not as issues of status but rather issues of citizenship and asked what people are doing to preserve their own communities.

Ms. Gabriel encouraged academic scholars to continue to engage in good research and to

provide solutions to problems, whether or not the government incorporates it or pushes it aside. Aboriginal peoples should have their own academic systems within their own communities. She hears presenters and participants talk about revitalization and self-determination, however, revitalization and self-determination are dependent on whether or not Canadians truly want reconciliation. She does not believe that current relations allow for true reconciliation, insofar as assimilation is still alive and well. Indigenous peoples need greater access to their lands and resources.

Dr. Malinda Smith then offered a few brief words on behalf of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Elder John Cree ended the Workshop by offering a closing prayer.

Conclusion

To summarize briefly, this workshop was envisioned as pursuing two goals: to explore the scholarly research pertinent to Indian, Métis and urban Aboriginal policy issues and to share our understanding of the ‘current state of the field’ and the future avenues that will require exploration. The eleven presenters, policy-minded scholars and practitioners, provided a host of analysis and policy recommendations on a wide array of relevant policy areas. One underlying issue that all analyses and discussions made abundantly clear is that “one size fits all” attempts to policy intervention will not do justice to the regional and socio-demographic specificity of the Aboriginal residents of Canada’s larger and smaller cities (not to mention towns and rural areas). Likewise, any policy interventions must take account of the previous four decades of policy relations specific to individual towns, cities and regions. Several presenters made particular mention of the distinctiveness of policy-making and policy relations by cities, and the distinctiveness of the socio-demographics of Aboriginal populations by region. Likewise, policy-making production must engage in respectful relations with the Aboriginal residents and communities and in doing so, must take seriously both the diversity and complexity of Aboriginal intellectual traditions in its construction. What has been made abundantly clear is that “old ways” of doing so do not work and that new policy making must change both the areas of focus and the dynamics through which is produced. This conference constitutes an early step in this direction and in this context, the workshop was also host to the launching of a new journal – *aboriginal policy studies* – within which many of these presentations will appear as peer-reviewed journal articles.