

National Aboriginal Youth Strategy

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I. Introduction

Aboriginal¹ youth are a dynamic component of Canadian society. They are the future leaders, educators, professionals and role models of their communities. They are the links to the history and tradition of the past, but they also hold the knowledge and vision for the future.

These same young people will play a pivotal role in shaping Canada's future for the new millennium. Aboriginal youth represent the fastest growing segment of Canada's youth population. However, Aboriginal youth are among those who face the highest levels of poverty, unemployment, suicide, as well as experiencing low education levels and lack of access to basic health care services in Canada. In addition, labour market conditions are deteriorating for Aboriginal youth, aggravating a situation that already presents Aboriginal youth with far more challenges than other youth. The cultural, economic, social and political futures of Aboriginal youth will significantly impact the lives of all Canadians.

Aboriginal and government leaders recognize that focussed attention and strong actions are required to address these social and economic challenges in order to ensure constructive and optimistic prospects for Aboriginal youth. Strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal communities, where programs and services are designed and delivered through established and emerging organizations serving Aboriginal youth, should be encouraged. The delivery of programs and services based on mutual respect, recognition, responsibility, and sharing is in the best interest of all.

The National Aboriginal Youth Strategy is based on the belief that solutions and results can be realized when all stakeholders, including Aboriginal communities, governments and institutions, the private sector, community/voluntary agencies and individuals, work together in true partnership. The Strategy envisions Aboriginal youth having opportunities to pursue career and quality of life goals in support of individual choices as well as supporting the social and economic aspirations of Aboriginal communities.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework that will assist governments, institutions, and Aboriginal organizations in the:

1. development of policy; and,
2. design and delivery of programs and services for or accessed by Aboriginal youth.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the Strategy will help to achieve comparability between the current profile of Aboriginal youth and other Canadian youth. In some instances, Aboriginal organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments and institutions and communities may strive to close the gap at an accelerated rate.

III. Background

In November of 1997, Premiers, Territorial Leaders and the Leaders of the five national Aboriginal organizations² called on the federal government to convene a meeting with Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders. The purpose of this meeting was to address social issues related to Aboriginal peoples, a comprehensive process of social policy renewal and needs of Aboriginal youth.

In May of 1998, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders met in Quebec City and agreed to develop a National Aboriginal Youth Strategy. A working group comprised of representatives of the five national Aboriginal organizations, the federal government (represented by Human Resources Development Canada, the Privy Council Office and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and the Provinces/Territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Quebec³ was established to co-ordinate development of the Strategy. The national Aboriginal organizations have, or are developing, Aboriginal youth advisory structures. Aboriginal youth committees and advisory councils have provided input into the development of this Strategy. Appendix I provides a description of existing Aboriginal youth advisory structures.

Premiers and National Aboriginal Leaders met in March 1999, in Regina, and pressed for the timely completion of the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.

IV. Current Situation

Aboriginal youth and their families require access to opportunities in a supportive environment that encourages them to break the cycle of poverty, abuse, the struggle for cultural identity, the lack of family support, low education levels, crime, and low self-esteem. Without the necessary supports, Aboriginal youth and their families will find it difficult to overcome these obstacles and may not be able to realize their career aspirations or quality of life goals. Statistics⁴ on the current situation of Aboriginal youth illustrate the many serious challenges that Aboriginal youth face on a daily basis.

Demographics

- Recent estimates suggest that the Aboriginal population is growing at an average annual rate of about 2.3 percent, more than twice the rate of the rest of the Canadian population.
- The Aboriginal population continues to display a very "youthful" age structure. In 1996, the average age of the Aboriginal population was about 25.5 years, roughly 10 years younger than other Canadians.
- The population of Aboriginal youth is expected to grow at a rate of about 1.4 percent annually through the 1996-2011 period. A more rapid rate of growth (about 2.4 percent annually) is expected during this period in the Aboriginal labour force age group (15-64 years).

- Educational levels among Aboriginal youth lagged behind those of other Canadians by a wide margin in all provinces and territories and in both rural and urban areas.
- More than two-thirds of Aboriginal youth who were not attending school reported an education level below high school certification.

Health

- During the 1989-1993 period, the mortality rate among registered Indian youth was about 3.6 times higher than that of other Canadian youth.
- About 6.5 percent of all Aboriginal youth reported disabilities, which limited normal daily functioning. The incidence of disability among Aboriginal youth was about 1.7 times higher than among other Canadian youth.
- Suicide deaths accounted for nearly one-third of all deaths among registered Indian youth. The rate among registered Indian male youth was more than 5 times that of the Canadian youth rate. Among female youth, the rate of suicide deaths among registered Indians was nearly 8 times that of other Canadian youth.

Culture

- About 1 in 5 Aboriginal youth reported an Aboriginal mother tongue in 1996, a rate about 2.5 times lower than that of their grandparent's generation.
- Nearly one-half of Aboriginal youth reported at least occasional participation in traditional Aboriginal activities. Only about one-quarter of Aboriginal youth, however, reported living off the land for at least one week in 1991.

Social

- High rates of mobility characterise the Aboriginal population, especially Aboriginal youth. Between 1995 and 1996, more than one-third of Aboriginal youth reported a change in residence, a rate roughly 1.4 times higher than that of other Canadian youth.
- In 1996, one-quarter of Aboriginal youth lived in a lone parent family, a rate roughly 1.6 times higher than that of other Canadian youth.
- Aboriginal youth were also much more likely than other Canadian youth to live in a low-income household. In 1996, more than 45 percent of all Aboriginal youth lived in households below the low income cut-off, a rate roughly 1.9 times higher than that of other Canadian youth.

Economic

- More than one-third of Aboriginal youth reported unemployment in 1996. The unemployment rate of Aboriginal female youth was about 2.1 times higher than that of their other Canadian counterparts. Male Aboriginal youth were about 2.3 times more likely than other male Canadian youth to report unemployment at that time.
- In 1995, average personal incomes among Aboriginal youth lagged behind those of other Canadian youth both on and off reserve and in most provinces/territories.
- In 1996, the rate of incarceration (in federal and provincial/territorial correction facilities) among Aboriginal youth aged 15-19 was about 9 times that of other Canadian youth in the same age category. Among youth aged 20-24 years, the Aboriginal incarceration rate was about 7 times higher than the rate of other Canadians aged 20-24 years.

It must also be noted that within some areas where proactive measures have been initiated, some positive trends have emerged. For example, Aboriginal longevity is increasing, the percentage of Aboriginal youth enrolled in post-secondary education programs is increasing, and Aboriginal youth full time employment earnings are almost equal to those of other Canadian youth. Governments, institutions and organizations recognize that these improved measures indicate the benefits of working together in partnerships to address the critical challenges facing Aboriginal youth.

V. Supporting a Vision for Aboriginal Youth

A healthy future involves building on the diversity of Aboriginal communities and recognizes their spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual and cultural values. Aboriginal youth recognize the

importance of knowing their traditions and history. They want to learn about and sustain their cultures and languages as a means of strengthening their well being. This concept is conveyed from an Aboriginal youth perspective in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report (RCAP) as follows:

We believe our heritage, culture and religion are what make us human beings. It is very difficult in the city to learn these things because many of the knowledgeable people who know about it and can help us with it don't live here. We must have help and resources so that we can reach out to these people and build connections between us and them, (4-157).

Aboriginal youth also envision a future that offers equitable opportunities to live successful and fulfilling lives. To do so, Aboriginal youth need to be equipped with the necessary skills, abilities and information to take advantage of the full range of education, training and employment possibilities.

The prospects of Aboriginal youth for economic well being should be equal to those afforded the rest of Canada's youth. In supporting this vision, governments and Aboriginal organizations would envision the following:

- community economic development, business and employment opportunities that are available and encouraged;
- involvement of Aboriginal youth in the decisions that impact their lives and recognition as equal partners in the development of their individual and collective futures;
- removal of barriers to social, education, and economic opportunities;

- environments that are supportive; and,
- implementation of measures to enable Aboriginal youth to enhance the quality of their lives, direct their future and fulfil their dreams.

All of these elements point to the need for solutions that reflect the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal youth and a more integrated approach to addressing issues and challenges.

Our goal was to move from a 'state' versus 'individual' focus to a 'people versus the 'problem' focus. We worked from the belief that the health of the child, family and community cannot be separated; that empowerment comes from ownership and accountability; that wisdom lies within each of us; that promotion efforts are essential for ensuring ongoing health. (First Nation Family Justice: MEE-noo-stah-tan Mi-ni-si-win Project, Awasis Child and Family Agency in Manitoba)

VI. Principles

All parties should work to achieve a co-operative vision and adopt a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach both within and between governments. Opportunities should be achievable, practical and realistic so that success is a possibility for Aboriginal youth in Canada. In keeping with this approach, governments, institutions, and Aboriginal organizations are encouraged to use the following principles to guide the development and implementation of Aboriginal youth programs and services (not presented in any particular order of priority):

1. *Inclusive:*

Aboriginal youth should be involved in the development of programs and services for and accessed by Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal youth must be involved in the Strategy to realise true success.

2. *Community Diversity and Community-based:*

The diversity of Aboriginal communities - with communities defined, in this document, as a gathering of similar people - should be recognized. Aboriginal youth programs and services should be tailored to the specific needs of individual communities wherever possible. Aboriginal communities should be involved in the design and delivery of programs and services for their youth wherever possible.

3. *Flexible:*

Strategies designed to address the concerns of Aboriginal youth should be adaptable to meet current issues and challenges, and responsive to emerging local and global issues which have an impact on Aboriginal youth. They should also be flexible to address the varying priorities and interests of different jurisdictions, governments, institutions, and organizations.

4. *Respectful:*

Traditional Aboriginal knowledge, customs, cultures and history should be valued and reflected in any plan of action around program design and delivery that is developed to meet the

needs of Aboriginal youth.

5. *Effectiveness and Efficiency*

Any approach should consider existing Aboriginal governance structures and institutions and utilize their expertise and services wherever possible. Initiatives should be implemented in a manner that reinforces and supports Aboriginal structures and institutions. These initiatives should also be complementary to relevant self-government policies, arrangements and agreements, and consistent with relevant treaties and land claims agreements.

6. *Holistic:*

Enhancement of existing policies and programs and the creation of new ones should take into consideration the spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual and cultural needs and aspirations of Aboriginal youth. It should demonstrate harmony of these aspects and reflect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures.

7. *Accessible:*

Programs and services should be transparent and provide information that is clear and easily accessible to Aboriginal youth, taking into account geographic and population realities. Information should be readily available to Aboriginal youth and should provide clear guidance on how youth can participate in or utilize programs and services. Issues of remoteness and costs affecting accessibility must be taken into consideration.

8. *Individual Empowerment:*

Aboriginal youth play a key role in helping Aboriginal communities achieve their social and economic goals and objectives. Programs and services should provide Aboriginal youth with the tools necessary to participate effectively in the decisions that affect their lives and enable them to contribute in the key and appropriate institutions and structures of governments, institutions, and communities.

9. *Community Empowerment:*

Many Aboriginal youth are raised with a strong belief in community values and view their individual pursuits as contributing to their family, community, governments, and institutions. Initiatives should recognize the importance of Aboriginal communities in assisting Aboriginal youth in achieving their goals and aspirations.

VII. Goals

All parties should work together to achieve the following set of common goals:

1. *Education and skills development*

To increase participation and successful achievements in education and training.

2. *Health*

To encourage opportunities for Aboriginal youth to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

3. *Culture*

To respect and promote Aboriginal cultures and communities including language, history, customs, traditions, self-identity, values and heritage. Many Aboriginal youth wish to reclaim their cultural identity and reconnect with their traditional values.

4. *Sport and Recreation*

To encourage Aboriginal youth to participate in sports, recreation and active living.

5. *Social*

To assist Aboriginal youth in achieving their aspirations for an improved quality of life.

6. *Economic*

To increase the awareness of Aboriginal youth regarding a range of economic opportunities. To increase Aboriginal youth participation in these economic opportunities.

7. *Political*

To support real opportunities for Aboriginal youth to become involved in the political development of their communities and governments, and in federal, provincial, and territorial political affairs.

8. *Process*

To increase the involvement of Aboriginal youth and their communities in the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services for Aboriginal youth. To develop an approach that strengthens community involvement and results in co-ordination between governments and institutions, Aboriginal organizations, and within federal, provincial and territorial governments concerning programs and services for Aboriginal youth.

9. *Public Education*

To encourage and support strategies designed to raise public awareness of the issues and challenges facing Aboriginal youth.

VIII. Suggested Initiatives

As this Strategy is intended to be a long term initiative, the objectives, initiatives and outcomes will likely change over time to address emerging issues and prospects. The chart in Appendix III describes the key goals, desired outcomes, suggested initiatives and measures of success for the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy. Combined, these components comprise the key elements of the Strategy.

Given the long-term objectives of this Strategy, the initiatives identified in Appendix III will evolve over time. The list of possible initiatives is not intended to be exhaustive but may serve as a menu of potential activities and actions to help address the needs of Aboriginal youth.

While these initiatives are targeted to Aboriginal youth in Canada, additional efforts should be made to respect and understand the unique cultures and traditions of Aboriginal people. Initiatives may need to be adapted to reflect the needs and priorities of Aboriginal youth with emphasis on the importance of youth becoming leaders and role models in their own communities.

Individual jurisdictions in partnership with Aboriginal organizations may review these initiatives and develop specific implementation and evaluation plans based on their needs, objectives, and resources. These initiatives should build on existing successful programs within jurisdictions and introduce ways to advance new and more pro-active programs. Any initiatives should be co-ordinated to maximize success and reduce duplication of programs and services for Aboriginal youth.

The National Aboriginal Youth Strategy is intended to be a dynamic strategy that can respond to the varying needs of Aboriginal youth and changing circumstances. The suggested initiatives represent examples of key action items that could be undertaken to enhance circumstances and opportunities for Aboriginal youth in Canada.

IX. Potential Linkages to Other Initiatives

This Strategy covers a wide range of social, cultural and economic issues of importance to Aboriginal youth. It is important that linkages and communications be developed between the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy and other national and regional initiatives. The purpose of establishing linkages will be to co-ordinate policy development and avoid duplication in the development of initiatives for Aboriginal youth.

In August, 1998, at the Annual Premier's Conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, the Premiers asked their Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Labour Market Ministers to work together, with national Aboriginal organizations, in the development of a National Aboriginal Youth Strategy. As an example, work is underway to look at ways to build linkages between activities of Labour Market Ministers and the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.

X. Ministerial/Leaders Approval Requested:

While the Strategy is designed to be flexible in addressing the needs and priorities of different jurisdictions and organizations, governments, institutions, and Aboriginal organizations must work together within their respective jurisdictions to develop an appropriate plan for implementation that reflects individual circumstances and situations of different regions across Canada.

It is requested that federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders approve the following recommendations:

- Endorse the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy and encourage all governments and institutions, Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal organizations to pursue a range of policy and program development initiatives for Aboriginal youth;
- Direct the Steering Committee to:
 1. Monitor progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategy; and,
 2. Report regularly to Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal Leaders on progress made.
- Encourage linkages between the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy and other related national and regional level initiatives;

Develop an inventory of programs and services for and accessed by Aboriginal youth and best practices based on existing data.

ENDNOTES

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term 'Aboriginal' includes all Aboriginal Peoples described in Section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

² The five national Aboriginal organizations involved are: the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the Metis National Council, the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

³Quebec concurs in the analysis and concerns expressed in the report of the working group on Aboriginal youth and subscribes, on the whole, to the suggested goals. Nevertheless, Quebec intends to find solutions to the problems faced by young Aboriginals within the context of its own policy directions and mechanisms, specifically on the occasion of the Quebec Summit on Youth.

⁴ The statistics included in this section are from "A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Youth in Canada, 1996" by Stewart Clatworthy and Michael Mendelson, September 26, 1999; the full summary is available in Appendix II of the Strategy (terminology in this section differs from the original summary)

⁵ "A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Youth in Canada, 1996" by Stewart Clatworthy and Michael Mendelson, September 26, 1999

Appendices

I. Description of existing Aboriginal youth advisory bodies

II. Summary of "A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Youth in Canada, 1996" by Stewart Clatworthy and Michael Mendelson, September 1996

III. Goals/Suggested Initiatives/Outcomes/Measures

Appendix I

Description of Existing Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committees

Assembly of First Nations (AFN)

National Youth Steering Committee

The 2nd National Youth Conference held March 8-11, 1999 in Ottawa passed two resolutions. One resolution called for Chiefs to bring two youth (1 male/1female) from their communities to Confederacy meetings, and Annual General Assemblies, to pass on the knowledge of the political structures. The second resolution established a steering committee to develop processes for youth involvement in the Assembly of First Nations. Thirty-five youth volunteered to be members of the steering committee, representative of most regional areas except for the Yukon, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick where representation is being recruited.

The Regional Vice-Chiefs were asked to select members for the steering committee from the list of volunteers. The Regional Vice-Chiefs from the Yukon, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick were asked for Youth representatives for the Steering Committee.

Twenty youth from across the country gathered in Vancouver to attend a National Mental Health Workshop and the Annual General Assembly. The youth wrote their own resolution for the existing steering committee members to develop a National Youth Council. The steering committee will act in an advisory capacity and elect two spokespersons (1male/1female) to carry forth the perspectives and views of First Nations youth. The 20th Annual General Assembly unanimously passed this resolution.

It is expected that the National Youth Council will be established within two years, and that it will parallel the Elders Council, which is an advisory body to the Executive Committee. It is anticipated that a Youth council member will sit with the Elders Council, and an Elder will sit with the Youth Council. The youth are extremely pleased to become a voice within the AFN, and look forward to linking with the elders and gaining their knowledge and insight on all issues that affect First Nations.

National Inuit Youth Council

The National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) represents Inuit youth under the age of 30. The total population of Inuit of Canada is 41,800, located in six regions. The regions are Inuvialuit, Kitikmeot, Kivalliq, Baffin, Nunavik and Labrador, and in those regions there are a total of 55 communities.

History

The National Inuit Youth Council was formed in November 1994, in Kuujuaq, Nunavik during the first National youth summit. The executive was elected from the 65 delegates present: the President, Vice-President, and the Secretary/Treasurer. It was established that each region would have two representatives appointed by the region. There were 13 resolutions passed which included issues ranging from education, justice, recreation, youth camps, communication, Inuit youth well-being, youth participation in Inuit organizations, codes of conduct, and Inuit participation in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

NIYC met in July 1995, in Ottawa, to draft by-laws, a code of conduct and a mission statement. The meeting was very successful and the mandate of that meeting was fulfilled.

The next NIYC summit was in February 1997 in Iqaluit, NT. There was strong support of NIYC's existence and a new executive was elected, with one major change; one member of the region was appointed the Regional Youth Coordinator. It was decided at this meeting that NIYC would take a different approach, rather than taking direction from the National level down to the regions, it would be the regions giving direction to the National level. This approach has had a positive impact on the functioning of NIYC.

NIYC today

Regular conference calls arranged by the Youth Intervenor of Inuit Tapirisat Canada to exchange project ideas, and discuss federal and territorial/provincial project funding availability. NIYC is working on several projects at the national level, which include an elder/youth conference and establishing a national newsletter.

Métis National Youth Advisory Council (MNYAC)

At the 1994 Métis National Council (MNC) Annual Assembly held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the MNC was mandated by way of resolution to create a Métis Youth Secretariat to address the needs, concerns and issues facing the youth of the Métis Nation. Subsequently, at the 1995 MNC Annual Assembly held in Calgary, Alberta, Métis Youth representatives, from each of the MNC's governing member organizations attended and were given the opportunity to voice their issues, concerns and explain the realities facing Métis youth today. At this meeting youth drafted the principles and vision statement for the MNC's youth secretariat and began the process of creating the Métis National Youth Advisory Council. After a year of working on

implementation, at the 1996 MNC Annual Assembly held in Ottawa, Ontario, the MNYAC's ratified the "Guiding Principles and Policies", solidifying the Métis Nation's youth movement within the MNC.

This recognition was a monumental step for the Métis Nation and Métis youth from across the Homeland. A self-sustainable youth initiative within Métis National Council was realized. This has motivated youth to actively participate within the Métis Nation at all levels. Major strides have been made through youth-driven programming, local youth councils and a higher awareness of youth issues within the Métis Nation.

The MNYAC is governed by its "Guiding Principles and Policies". It consists of two representatives from each of the MNC's five governing member organizations which consist of Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC), Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS), Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Executive members that include a Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary-Treasurer are elected every year by the MNYAC. The MNYAC works as a secretariat of the MNC and conducts itself in an advisory capacity to MNC and its Board of Governors.

The MNYAC has achieved many successes on behalf of Métis youth at the national level. Some of these successes include hosting two national Métis youth conferences, holding AIDS/HIV Talking Circles throughout the provinces, undertaking and completing a Homeland-wide consultation on the Urban Multi-Purpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC), administering international internships in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA, as well as, ensuring a Métis youth voice in numerous committees and initiatives, including:

Minister of the Environment's National Youth Roundtable

Aboriginal Business Canada's National Youth Advisory Committee

Canadian Public Health Association's Aboriginal Youth Health Career Committee

Future Trek 2000

Indigenous Sports Council

Aboriginal Justice Learning Network

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Canadian Council on Social Development's Youth Council for the *1998 Progress of Canada's Children Report* Youth Advisory Committee

Presently the MNYAC is working with the MNC and its governing member organization in the administration and delivery of the UMAC initiative, finalizing its first national Métis youth newspaper, developing a national Métis youth role model program and acting as Co-Chair on the Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Aboriginal Working Group developing a National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.

We must cherish our inheritance.

We must preserve our nationality for the youth of tomorrow.

Louis Riel, 1885

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

NWAC Youth Structure

The NWAC Youth Council has been an integral part of NWAC for many years. The Council consists of one youth representative from each of the Provincial/Territorial Member Associations (PTMA's). There are currently 12 regions represented. The membership consists of young Aboriginal women aged 17 to 25 who work to ensure that the voices of young Aboriginal women are heard.

Within the Council, there are four regional members and a National Youth Representative nominated to sit on the NWAC Board of Directors. It is the responsibility of each region to ensure that the youth know what is happening at the National level and within their regions.

The Council is currently in the process of revising the NWAC by-laws pertaining to youth. The Council also looks at employment, social and educational issues related to Aboriginal youth.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) Aboriginal Youth representation consists of a National Youth Representative together with the Provincial and Territorial Youth Representatives. The National Youth Representative is elected at CAP's National Youth Conference by the Provincial and Territorial youth delegates.

Each provincial and territorial jurisdiction has structures to represent youth at the zone and local levels as well as the provincial/territorial levels. The National Youth Representative organizes the national discussion of issues by the provincial youth representatives at meetings and conference calls and coordinates the communication of information to provincial/territorial youth representatives on youth issues nationally. For the Congress's Annual General Meeting, each Provincial and Territorial organization includes voting youth delegates as part of their representation. The National Youth Representative sits as a voting member of the CAP's Board of Directors.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples held a youth conference entitled "Aboriginal Youth in the new Millenium" in Regina, Saskatchewan January 28-30, 1999. The conference included workshops on various issues such as leadership, Aboriginal youth rebuilding, youth and the media, employment, economic development, spirituality and other workshops. The conference included elections of a National Youth Representative and an open session where youth voiced their concerns on a wide variety of issues including Aboriginal rights, health, Elders, homelessness, student funding, children, residential school survivors, off-reserve and non-status issues, information sharing, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, racism, deconstruction of faulty stereotypes, need for youth centres, youth as role models, community improvement, education and employment.

Appendix II

Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Youth in Canada

Section 10: Summary of Main Findings⁵

This report has presented a broad range of statistical indicators of the demographic, social, cultural and economic characteristics of Aboriginal youth in Canada. Although several data sources are used in the study, most of the indicators are derived from the Census of Canada and present the circumstances of Aboriginal youth in 1996. Where possible, the study presents indicators at the national and provincial/territorial levels, for on and off reserve locations, as well as for 11 urban centres which contained particularly large Aboriginal populations in 1996. Key findings of the study are summarized below:

Population and Demographic Characteristics

- According to the 1996 Census, the population reporting Aboriginal identity totalled 799,010, including 529,035 North American Indians, 204,120 Metis, 40,220 Inuit and 25,635 others.
- About 29 percent of the Aboriginal population identified by the Census resided on reserve, 22 percent in off-reserve rural areas, and 49 percent in urban areas.
- In 1996, about 45 percent of the total Aboriginal population lived in one of the three Prairie Provinces. Ontario and British Columbia also accounted for large proportions of the total population.
- Recent estimates suggest that the Aboriginal population is growing at an average annual rate of about 2.3 percent, more than twice the rate of the general Canadian population.
- The Aboriginal population continues to display a very "youthful" age structure. In 1996, the average age of the Aboriginal population was about 25.5 years, roughly 10 years younger than the non-Aboriginal population.
- The 1996 population of Aboriginal youth (15-24 years) totalled 143,790 individuals. Youth formed about 18 percent of the total Aboriginal population, compared to about 13 percent of the non-Aboriginal population.
- The population of Aboriginal youth is growing more quickly (about 1.4 times faster) than the non-Aboriginal youth population.

- Although the fertility rate of the Aboriginal population is declining, it remains well above (about 1.6 times higher than) that of the general Canadian population.
- Aboriginal mortality rates are also declining, although the average life expectancy of the Aboriginal population lags the general population by about 6 years.
- High rates of mobility characterize the Aboriginal population, especially Aboriginal youth. Between 1995 and 1996, more than one-third of Aboriginal youth reported a change in residence, a rate roughly 1.4 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth.
- Migration (i.e. changing one's community of residence) is also much more common among Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal people. Between 1995 and 1996, about 13 percent of Aboriginal youth moved to a new community, a migration rate about 1.3 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth.
- Aboriginal migration flows during the 1991-1996 period served to increase the population residing on reserve. Aboriginal populations in off-reserve areas (both rural and urban) experienced losses through migration during the period.
- High rates of Aboriginal population growth are projected to occur throughout the next 20-year period. Growth during the 1996-2011 period is expected to occur at a rate of 1.8 percent annually, about 1.7 times faster than the Canadian rate.
- The population of Aboriginal youth is expected to grow at a rate of about 1.4 percent annually through the 1996-2011 period. A more rapid rate of growth (about 2.4 percent annually) is expected during this period in the Aboriginal labour force age group (15-64 years).

Living Arrangements of Aboriginal Children and Youth

- In 1996, more than 1 in 10 Aboriginal children were not living with their parents, a rate roughly 7 times that of non-Aboriginal children.
- About 3 of every 10 Aboriginal children lived in a lone parent family, a rate roughly twice that of non-Aboriginal children. In Winnipeg, Vancouver, Saskatoon and Regina roughly one-half of all Aboriginal children lived with a lone parent.
- In 1996, one-quarter of Aboriginal youth lived in a lone parent family, a rate roughly 1.6 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth.
- In relation to non-Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal youth were 3 times more likely than to be a lone parent and about 2.5 times more likely to live with a common-law partner.

Health and Safety Circumstances

- During the 1989-1993 period, the mortality rate among registered Indian youth was about 3.6 times higher than that of Canadian youth.
- Roughly 78 percent of deaths among registered Indian youth resulted from injuries or poisoning.
- Suicide deaths accounted for nearly one-third of all deaths among registered Indian youth. The rate among registered Indian male youth was more than 5 times that of the Canadian youth rate. Among female youth, the rate of suicide deaths among registered Indians was nearly 8 times that of Canadian youth.
- About 6.5 percent of all Aboriginal youth reported disabilities, which limited normal daily functioning. The incidence of disability among Aboriginal youth was about 1.7 times higher than among non-Aboriginal youth.
- Aboriginal youth accounted for roughly 36 percent of all youth admissions to remand during the 1997/98 fiscal period. In all jurisdictions reporting data, rates of admission to remand were substantially higher among Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal youth.
- Aboriginal youth accounted for about 71 percent of all admissions to remand in Manitoba. The rate of admission to remand among Aboriginal youth in Manitoba was about 10 times higher than among non-Aboriginal youth. Among female youth, the Aboriginal rate was more than 22 times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate.
- In 1996, the rate of incarceration (in federal and provincial/territorial corrections facilities) among Aboriginal youth aged 15-19 was about 9 times that of similarly aged non-Aboriginal youth. Among youth aged 20-24 years, the Aboriginal incarceration rate was about 7 times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate.

Social Cohesion and Attachment to Culture

- About 1 in 5 Aboriginal youth reported an Aboriginal mother tongue in 1996, a rate about 2.5 times lower than that of their grandparent's generation.
- Only 15 percent of Aboriginal youth reported use of an Aboriginal language in the home.
- Nearly one-half of Aboriginal youth reported at least occasional participation in traditional Aboriginal activities. Only about one-quarter of Aboriginal youth, however, reported living off the land for at least one week in 1991.

Human Resource Characteristics

- About 69 percent of Aboriginal youth aged 15-19 years were attending school in 1996. Among youth aged 20-24 years, the rate of school attendance was about 31 percent. Aboriginal school attendance rates among both groups lagged behind those of non-Aboriginal youth.
- In 1996, Aboriginal youth were considerably less likely than non-Aboriginal youth to have attended university or another post-secondary educational institution.
- About 16 percent of Aboriginal youth aged 20-24 years who reported university attendance had earned a university degree, roughly one-half the completion rate of similarly aged non-Aboriginal youth. Among young adults (i.e. 25-29 years), the university completion rate was about 2.2 times lower among the Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal population.
- More than two-thirds of Aboriginal youth who were not attending school reported an education level below high school certification.
- Among Aboriginal youth not attending school, about 11 percent had earned a high school diploma, eight (8) percent had earned a non-university, post-secondary certificate and about 1 percent had earned a university degree.
- Educational levels among Aboriginal youth lagged behind those of non-Aboriginal by a wide margin in all provinces and territories and in both rural and urban areas.

Labour Market Behaviour and Outcomes

- In 1996, Aboriginal youth were much less likely than non-Aboriginal youth to be active in the labour market.
- More than one-third of Aboriginal youth reported unemployment in 1996. The unemployment rate of Aboriginal female youth was about 2.1 times higher than that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Male Aboriginal youth were about 2.3 times more likely than male, non-Aboriginal youth to report unemployment at that time.
- Roughly 28 percent of all Aboriginal youth reported some employment in 1995. Nearly 80 percent of those who worked reported employment on a partial year or part-time basis. Only 5.6 percent of all Aboriginal youth reported working on a full-year, full-time basis compared to about 10 percent of non-Aboriginal youth.
- Although aboriginal youth were much less likely to be employed on a full-time basis throughout 1995, among those that were; employment income levels were comparable to similar non-Aboriginal workers. In off-reserve locations, the average employment earnings of Aboriginal youth who worked full-time throughout 1995, was about 98 percent that of similar non-Aboriginal workers.

About 1 in 7 Aboriginal youth who worked in 1996 was employed in the public sector; a rate roughly 1.8 times that of non-Aboriginal youth.

Incomes and Income Adequacy

- In 1995, average personal incomes among Aboriginal youth lagged behind those of non-Aboriginal youth both on and off reserve and in most provinces/territories.
- In 1996, more than one-half of all Aboriginal children lived in households with incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cut-off. The incidence of low income among Aboriginal children was about 2.3 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal children.
- In both Manitoba and Saskatchewan more than 6 of every 10 Aboriginal children lived in a low-income household. Especially high rates of low income were reported among Aboriginal

children in Saskatoon (74 percent), Regina (74 percent), Winnipeg (72 percent) and Edmonton (65 percent).

- Aboriginal youth were also much more likely than non-Aboriginal youth to live in a low-income household. In 1996, more than 45 percent of all Aboriginal youth lived in households below the low income cut-off, a rate roughly 1.9 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth.
- A majority of youth in the Prairie Provinces and in all major prairie urban centres lived in low-income households in 1999.

Appendix III Goals/Suggested Initiatives/Desired Outcomes/Measures of Success

<p>Education and Skills Development</p> <p><i>To increase participation and success in all aspects of education and training.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop cross-cultural training for teachers, administrators, and instructors; • Increase availability of and access to distance education opportunities in rural and urban areas; • Develop initiatives to help orient Aboriginal youth for entry into colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions; • Establish and review apprenticeship training programs to ensure sensitivity to Aboriginal cultures, needs and priorities; • Review and revise Provincial/Territorial K-12 curriculum to ensure compatibility with Aboriginal cultures and perspectives; • Facilitate and support a representative workforce in schools and post-secondary institutions (professional and administrative); • Develop early childhood education programs (0 to 6 years) with Aboriginal cultural components (such as "Health Canada's Aboriginal <i>Head Start</i> Initiative"); • Implement Aboriginal studies courses in university teacher education programs; • Celebrate Aboriginal youth achievements by implementing award programs; • Introduce measures to facilitate the ability of high school graduates to secure jobs; • Establish forums for Aboriginal youth to learn about career opportunities such as career fairs and mentoring programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase education attainment levels for Aboriginal youth; • Increase high school completion; • Increase participation in post-secondary education programs and graduate levels; • Increase participation in Apprenticeship and trades training programs; • Increase Aboriginal youth participation in the work force. 	
<p>Health</p> <p><i>To ensure that Aboriginal youth have the capacity to enjoy healthy lifestyles.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a range of health promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment and rehabilitative measures to address a range of often coexisting health challenges including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mental health and behavioural disorders (including FAS/FAE); ○ Alcohol and substance abuse/addiction issues; ○ Recruitment into the sex trade; <p style="text-align: center;">Sexually transmitted diseases;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intentional and unintentional injuries and deaths; ○ The need for physical activity; ○ The need for safe and healthy families and communities; and ○ The need for healing. • Promote healthy lifestyles through information on nutrition, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce incidence of alcohol and substance abuse; • Decrease risk of diabetes and HIV/AIDS; • Reduce incidents of teenage pregnancy; • Decrease number of Aboriginal youth involved in the sex trade; • Increase participation in sports events by Aboriginal youth; • Reduced rates of Aboriginal youth suicide. 	

- traditional diets, fitness, etc;
- Promote traditional healing medicines and practices;
- Provide youth that have been involved in the sex trade with support, counselling, guidance and "Safe Houses" to assist them in exiting from these activities.

Culture

To respect and promote all elements of Aboriginal culture including language, history, customs, traditions, knowledge and self-identity, values and heritage.

- Develop language and cultural supports in communities in rural and urban areas;
 - Introduce cultural components into Aboriginal youth programs;
 - Develop partnerships between Aboriginal organizations and governments on cultural awareness issues and programs;
 - Sponsor and support training in traditional art forms and encourage new opportunities;
 - Encourage participation in cultural programs and traditional ceremonies;
 - Recognize the need to promote Aboriginal distinctiveness respectful of the uniqueness of Aboriginal peoples-First Nation, Metis, and Inuit-reflected in the services and programs of governments.
- Increase retention of Aboriginal languages;
 - Increase knowledge and practice of customs and traditions;

Sport and Recreation

To encourage Aboriginal youth to participate in sports, recreation and active living.

- Involve more Aboriginal youth in lifelong sports, recreation and active living and educate them on the benefits thereof;
 - Support recreation, sports and active living at the community level to help Aboriginal youth develop leadership and other skills;
 - Promote Aboriginal sport development in Aboriginal Coaching Development; the North American Indigenous Games; and through the National and Provincial/territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.
- Increased participation in sports, recreation and active living by Aboriginal youth;
 - Increased number of Aboriginal youth and Coaches participating in Aboriginal Coaching Development programs.

Social

To assist Aboriginal youth in achieving their aspirations for an improved quality of life.

- Establish exchange programs for Aboriginal youth between Aboriginal and other communities to encourage learning experiences;
 - Support Aboriginal communities in developing Aboriginal youth justice issues and programming such as early intervention, diversion initiatives, community policing, restorative justice and crime prevention;
 - Support child care and day care programs focused on the needs of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal youth;
 - Promote education to celebrate cultural distinctiveness;
 - Support the role of Aboriginal communities in administering their own child protection and adoption services;
 - Establish components of Aboriginal programs to address disability issues.
- Decrease number of Aboriginal children in care;
 - Increase availability of Aboriginal adoptive families;
 - Decrease Aboriginal youth suicide rates;
 - Decrease incidence of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth and child abuse of Aboriginal youth;
 - Improve ties between Aboriginal youth and their communities;
 - Reduce incidence of teenage pregnancy;

<p>Economic</p> <p><i>To increase the awareness of Aboriginal youth regarding a range of economic opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>To increase Aboriginal youth participation in these economic opportunities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foster economic development awareness for Aboriginal youth in terms of how they may participate in opportunities arising out of land claims, self-government, business and entrepreneurship; ● Incorporate economic awareness and information into school curriculum; ● Facilitate job placement for Aboriginal youth including skilled, professional and apprenticeship areas to develop transferable skills in partnership with the private sector; ● Prepare Aboriginal youth for employment through job market analysis information, pre-employment training, counselling and work experience in rural and urban areas; ● Encourage partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth; ● Establish cross-cultural training for the workplace and the private sector; ● Establish programs to assist Aboriginal youth in exploring careers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase income levels for Aboriginal families and youth; ● Increase employment levels for Aboriginal youth; ● Increase labour force participation rates across all professions; ● Increase number of Aboriginal youth business owners/partners;
<p>Political</p> <p><i>To support real opportunities to participate in the political development of their communities, and in federal, provincial and territorial political affairs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop programs to increase the number and proportion of Aboriginal youth on public and private sector boards, councils and committees; ● Utilize existing Aboriginal structures and institutions in the delivery of Aboriginal youth programs and services; ● Involve Aboriginal youth in all levels of government where possible; ● Develop training programs and exchange information on governance structures between Aboriginal governments and other governments; ● Establish work exchange and secondment programs between Aboriginal communities and governments; ● Encourage creation of task forces of Aboriginal youth on specific policy issues affecting Aboriginal youth; ● Support leadership development programs for Aboriginal youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase number of Aboriginal youth on governing boards, councils and commissions; ● Increase leadership skills amongst Aboriginal youth
<p>Process</p> <p><i>To increase involvement of Aboriginal youth in design and delivery of programs and services.</i></p> <p><i>To develop integrated and co-ordinated approach across departments and between organizations on Aboriginal youth programs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish National Aboriginal Youth Advisory Council to provide input into federal government policies and programs; ● Develop sampling of best practices to inform the implementation of the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy; ● Establish mechanisms for communicating between governments and Aboriginal organizations on initiatives affecting Aboriginal youth using advanced technology; ● Recognize successful program delivery mechanisms and ensure their application in different program areas; ● Utilize delivery mechanisms that enhance and support Aboriginal structures and institutions; ● Support integration of programs and delivery measures across departments and governments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase participation and success rates of Aboriginal youth attending Aboriginal specific programming.

Public Education

To encourage and support strategies designed to raise public awareness of issues and challenges facing Aboriginal youth.

- Organize a National Aboriginal Youth Conference to raise awareness regarding the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy and to discuss its implementation;
 - Establish ways to share information with Aboriginal youth on new and existing programs and services including creation of an Aboriginal youth Website;
 - Disseminate statistical and other research information on Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal youth issues; and,
 - Develop a communications strategy to inform governments, institutions, Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal organizations and other parties of the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.
- Increased awareness of the issues and challenges facing Aboriginal youth
 - Improved information sharing and increased use of technology in disseminating information.
 - Increased knowledge of the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.