

Preface

David Newhouse and Tricia McGuire-Adams

Over the last century, Aboriginal peoples in Canada, like the rest of the country's population, have been moving to urban areas. According to the 2006 Census, more than half (54 percent) of Aboriginal peoples now live in urban areas, and demographic projections forecast that this figure will continue to grow. Urban Aboriginal peoples have been seen as another aspect of the "Indian problem," and until recently, governments at both the federal and provincial levels saw this "problem" as the responsibility of another jurisdiction. In the past, there was little research on this population; as a result, the dimensions of urban Aboriginal lives and the issues facing urban Aboriginal peoples have not been examined and analyzed in the rigorous fashion necessary to facilitate the development of good public policy. Over the last forty years, urban Aboriginal peoples' organizations have been developing a body of knowledge and practice that is now the basis of a wide array of programming and services. These practices, and the knowledge gained from implementing them, have also not been systematically explored and shared among policy-makers.

In an effort to close these knowledge gaps, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) and the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (formerly Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) co-led the creation of the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) in 2007. The goal of UAKN is to create a durable research infrastructure that focuses attention on urban Aboriginal concerns and contributes to a better quality of life for Aboriginal peoples living in cities and towns across the country.

The network has focused its efforts on funding high-quality, policy-relevant research undertaken by local research centres that bring together urban Aboriginal community practitioners, academic researchers, and government policy analysts in an ongoing, constructive, multi-perspective dialogue on policy priorities and research needs. The output of the network is increased, improved, and shared research, which will provide a better understanding of how urban Aboriginal peoples are "living a good life," or *mino-biimaadiziwin*, in the urban setting. This research will also provide a clearer understanding of the policy and programming approaches and elements that can contribute to good lives. At *Fostering Biimaadiziwin: A National Research Conference on Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, examples of how urban Aboriginal community members, academics,

and policy-makers are addressing these important issues by exemplifying good research and practice were presented.

The conference was co-hosted by NAFC, Trent University, and the University of Sudbury, through UAKN, in Toronto on February 23 and 24, 2011. This was the first national conference focusing on urban Aboriginal research. It was a resounding success as a total of 120 papers were presented by 366 academics, graduate students, community members, and policy practitioners, highlighting research being conducted in urban Aboriginal communities. All of the research presented at the conference was undertaken through highly collaborative efforts between community organizations, universities, and governments, including research-granting agencies. These efforts are representative of the collaborative, community-based, Western- and Indigenous-knowledge-driven research model that has emerged over the last two decades.

We wish to thank the various partners that made the conference possible: Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the National Aboriginal Health Organization, and the Government of Ontario. We also wish to thank Heather King-Andrews and Tricia McGuire-Adams of the National Association of Friendship Centres for their excellent administrative support for the project and for this book. Without their able assistance, this project would have floundered and taken much longer.

We acknowledge and honour all of our ancestors and colleagues who work tirelessly to improve the lives of all people, and who are creating places of dignity and respect for Aboriginal peoples again, in this land now called Canada.

Introduction

David Newhouse and Kevin FitzMaurice

Aboriginal People in the City: From the Study of Problems to Community Engagement and the Fostering of Mino-Biimaadziwin

Fostering Biimaadziwin, a National Research Conference on Urban Aboriginal Peoples grew out of a desire to try to add a new perspective to the research concerning Aboriginal peoples who live in urban centres. This research is dominated by the underlying notion of an “Indian problem,” a notion that suggests that Aboriginal peoples are problems to be dealt with through the development of policy and programs by governments. *Mino-biimaadziwin* is an Anishinaabe idea that describes a key life objective for all Anishinabek to aspire to. Using this concept to frame research on urban Aboriginal peoples grounds the research in an Aboriginal world view and philosophy and offers an alternative to the discourse of problems/deficits. Adopting a mino-biimaadziwin framework can, however, be a challenge for researchers, as the forces keeping the “Indian problem” paradigm in place are strong. The public policy question that arises from this change of paradigm is: What should governments, provinces, and communities do to foster mino-biimaadziwin (the good life) for Aboriginal peoples?

For the past decade and a half, Kevin and I have taught first-year courses in Indigenous/Native studies at Trent University and the University of Sudbury. Despite demographic evidence to the contrary, it is difficult for students to accept that Aboriginal peoples in Canada have become an urban people. They enter the class with images of Aboriginal peoples as rural or northern, images that are supported by the popular and mass media. Even among our colleagues, the idea that we ought to start the course with this urban reality is a difficult one. The urbanization of Aboriginal peoples is instead presented as one of series of issues affecting them. The accepted way to present and discuss these issues is through the application of perspectives and tools from sociology. We have suggested, to little avail, that we ought to develop a new paradigm, “urbanism,” as urbanization appears to be almost complete. What we ought to explore is the way in which Aboriginal cultures and communities are changing as a result of their encounter with and accommodation of the urban experience.

Our personal and academic experiences suggest a strong resistance to the idea that one can live a good life in the city, and still retain core elements of aboriginality and a strong attachment to the idea of the city as a site of loss. Like the members of the Supreme Court who measure aboriginality in terms of practices

“integral to the distinctive culture of the Aboriginal group” at the time of initial contact, the urban does not easily feature in contemporary Aboriginal life. It is hard to practice agriculture or fishing or hunting in the city, unless one counts gardening or supermarket shopping as extensions of these activities.

We began to understand that urban sites were not seen or experienced as a neutral environment by many Aboriginal people. It is transformative, as many may fear. The urban restructures lives for Aboriginal people, as it has done for people throughout the world for centuries. Many of our students speak of this transformational effect upon their daily lives. It is true that there are those who see and experience cities as sites of loss (of culture, of heritage, of spirituality), or sites of continuing social and economic despair. Some will never experience well-being in the city but, as found in the 2010 Environics Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, an increasing number now consider the city their home. Home is a complex multi-effect phenomenon involving the complex notions of attachment, sense of belonging, and sometimes strife.

The historical literature on urban Aboriginal peoples is what we call a “study in lack,” indicating an absence of desired characteristics. It wasn’t until the work of Aboriginal scholars emerged at the end of the twentieth century that the urban environment was characterized in positive terms. These new scholars turned to central ideas in Indigenous thought—community, relationships, interconnectedness—which were then used to describe urban experiences. Rejecting the absence of the urban in Aboriginal North America, Forbes, in Lobo and Peters (*American Indians and the Urban Experience*, 2001), discusses the “urban tradition” in Native America, focusing on the Indigenous civilizations of Mexico and South America. He seeks to bring the idea of historic urban Aboriginal communities into our understanding of Aboriginal peoples. The idea of the urban is not lacking in Aboriginal thought or history, only in European ideas about Aboriginal peoples.

Lack is an extremely powerful idea, perhaps best expressed in the recent consultation report of the Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative, which notes, “the four most common concerns for community and service providers were systemic discrimination; lack of community involvement in policy, programme planning, and institutional change; lack of cross-cultural training; and lack of Aboriginal role models in all systems at all levels of service” (n.d., 42). The executive summary is more direct in its reliance on the idea of what is lacking for Aboriginal people in Calgary:

The main issues or priorities discussed in the justice domain were the lack of Aboriginal staff in all areas of the justice system; lack of prevention, education, and support; lack of, or inflexible funding; warehousing of Aboriginal people in the prison system; lack of awareness/support re: women; systemic discrimination; loss of Métis issues under the First Nations, Aboriginal umbrella; downloading to community without

proper support/resources; healing/correction vs. punishment model; non-coordination of services; transportation issues; and lack of attention to social precursors of crime (e.g., poverty, racism, addictions, etc.). (n.d., 3)

The idea of lack emerges from the work of the early sociologists and anthropologists who began to examine the phenomenon of Aboriginal movement to cities and towns, which had begun in the 1950s. This migration, already well known to Aboriginal peoples, had led to the development of Indian Friendship Centres in several places across the country: Toronto (1951), Vancouver (1952) and Winnipeg (1959). These centres served to facilitate adaptation to urban environments, or more precisely, focused upon the adaptation of Indian/Métis people to the Euro-Canadian urban environment. These urban institutions focused upon improving education, and obtaining employment and housing for individuals who had recently migrated to the city. While this project was important and was motivated by a strong sense of compassion and the desire to improve the quality of daily life for urban Aboriginal peoples, it was also based on the notion of “Aboriginal lack” and was consistent with the widely held notion that Indians lacked the necessary skills and wherewithal to survive in an urban environment.

It is not surprising then to discover that the earliest studies: Dosman (*Indians: The Urban Dilemma*, 1972) and Nagler (*Indians in the City*, 1970) focused upon the social and economic status of Aboriginal people in the city and documented very real evidence of lack amongst this population. Neils (*Reservation to City*, 1971) and Krotz (*Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities*, 1980) continued these themes. In all of this literature, the urban landscape is presented as inhospitable to Aboriginal people. It is a place where poverty abounds, social disorder reigns, and individuals live out lives, to use a phrase coined by Thomas Hobbes, that are “nasty, brutish, and short.” While some survive and thrive in urban environments, they do so by leading middle-class lives and shedding many parts of a cultural identity that is synonymous with poverty and malaise. Those who do not are destined for difficult lives. In a research paradigm of “Indian problems” within a default condition of “lack,” it is virtually impossible to embrace the urban and remain a healthy, well-functioning Aboriginal individual.

It is important to note that all three texts present some evidence of successfully integrated Indians. These Indians, however, live outside the main segments of the majority of Indians and many express an ambivalence about their identity as Indians. As one respondent in the 1972 Dosman study suggested,

It does not really matter whether you are Indian or not. There are those who cry because they are Indian and not getting anywhere. They are not getting anywhere because they are lazy or because they just don't know how. Then there are others like that—on the stage. He really enjoys being an Indian, and he

really thinks he is god's gift. The ones call[ed] adjusted I guess are like me. I don't care. I do my work. I am what I am, that's what everybody should be. (Dosman, 82)

The urban has indeed been transformative. This theme of lack remains dominant in the social service literature that emerges from this era and continues today. There are strong forces that make it difficult to resist characterizing the urban environment in this fashion. Government funding is predicated on the notions of “problem and solution”—the bigger the problem, the greater the amount of funding that might be available. With funding comes agencies/institutions and employment. While the original sense of lack was based upon the notion of “individual lack,” it has more recently been seen as a “community lack,” as the Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative consultation report above notes. It is now urban Aboriginal communities, as a collective, that are lacking.

A shift in focus began in the mid-1970s with the investigation by Guillame (*Urban Renegades: The Cultural Strategy of American Indians*, 1975) of the Mi'kmaq (“Micmac” in her report) in Boston. Instead of focusing on lack, she examined the way in which Mi'kmaq individuals were adapting to life in Boston and how they conceived of their lives as urban residents. The city, for many in her study, was not a site of loss but a site of reinvention. Many felt no need to leave their Indianness behind, or even their rural communities in Maine and Nova Scotia. The urban site was simply incorporated into their lives and a new urban Mi'kmaq culture began to emerge. Guillame also highlights the importance of community as a central theme of urban aboriginal life. Indians, she argues, are resilient and adaptable; they are simply adding the urban to their life experiences and creating an “urban Indian culture” out of Mi'kmaq and Boston cultures.

Krotz (1980) discusses the idea of the “urban Indian” identity that was emerging within the work of sociologists and anthropologists of his era:

The urban Indian is identified not by his reserve affiliation or by his treaty status or by his socio-economic position. He or she is identified by ethnicity and heritage, even (or especially) while living in the city...(an) identity forged by a combination of adherence to traditional values and a history of being outcasts from the larger society...The Native organizations, clubs, social centres...should not be seen as temporary institutions meant simply to smooth the transition from reserve or rural area to city but as the beginning of a growing infrastructure for an Indian urban culture. (156)

Stanbury (*Success and Failure: Indians in Urban Society*, 1975) documents the state of lack experienced by Indians living in urban centres in British Columbia in the early 1970s. While pointing out the extreme lack, he also concludes: “We did not discern any evidence to suggest that Indians living in urban centres must

‘go white’ in order to be economically and socially successful. Certain non-traditional patterns of behavior must be adopted but these need not result in the loss of cultural identity” (255).

Weibel-Orlando describes her study of American Indians in Los Angeles (*Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society*, 1991) as an examination of identity maintenance in which the development of community and its institutions is central. She documents the emergence of a Los Angeles Native American community over a twenty-year period. LaGrand (“Urban American Indian Identity in a U.S. City: The Case of Chicago from the 1950s to the 1970s,” 2003) does the same with a study of urban Indians in Chicago from the 1950s to the 1970s. The urban site then becomes the site of community, one of the central institutions in Indigenous social thought. Urban Aboriginal communities are composed of individuals and institutions amidst a sea of relationships, connected to the home territories of their residents. The urban and the rural are intertwined in complex ways.

Both Lobo and Weibel-Orlando conceive of the urban as a positive force in Aboriginal peoples lives. While there are problems, the urban should not be inconsistent with our notions of Aboriginal. Indeed, Forbes (in Lobo and Peters) constructs a history of the urban in Aboriginal North America. He argues that there were large urban centres in North America prior to the arrival of Europeans, and that our notions of urban, based to a large extent upon European/North American ideas of “city,” ought to be rethought to include Indigenous notions of the urban. The urban in Aboriginal history has been systematically erased because it would allow for the idea of “Aboriginal civilization,” a notion that would have been inconsistent with European thought of the day.

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) (1996) picks up the notion of an urban community. Urban is now a perspective, one among many for Aboriginal peoples. Interestingly, while noting that Aboriginal people who live in urban centres are now in the majority, urban peoples are shifted to the back of the text, after women, the North, and Métis (all of which are labelled perspectives as well). The RCAP was reluctant to examine the issue of urban Aboriginal peoples, as that would have required a shift in focus from rural to urban issues and a reconception of Aboriginal peoples, a reconception that many are reluctant to acknowledge. (More than ten years after the release of the RCAP report, I still encounter first-year Indigenous studies’ students who are shocked to discover that the majority of Aboriginal peoples live in cities. Native studies curriculae remain strangely devoid of the issue.)

The urban environment, according to the findings of the RCAP, is now a site of established, long-standing urban Aboriginal communities that are essential to the maintenance of Aboriginal identities, although the report also states that “following three decades of urbanization, development of a strong community remains largely incomplete” (Vol. 4, 530–31) and “with little collective visibility or power” (ibid). There is always something lacking.

What has been accomplished, despite the consistent focus on what is missing or lacking, is a refutation of the notion that the urban is inconsistent with the idea of Aboriginal: “The urban environment is now seen as a place where Aboriginal people can live good lives as Aboriginal peoples provided that there is evidence of a strong community that supports the core elements of urban Aboriginal identity: spirituality, language, land base, values and tradition, family and ceremonial life” (Vol. 4, 533). Weibel-Orlando (1991), Lobo and Peters (2001), Fixico (2000), and Sanderson and Howard-Bobiwash (*The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto*, 1997) document histories of urban Aboriginal communities. Any doubt of the existence of urban Aboriginal communities is made problematic by the forty-year history of the development and work of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. Shorten (*Without Reserve: Stories from Urban Natives*, 1991) documents the life stories of a dozen urban Aboriginal individuals living in Edmonton.

The RCAP final report grapples with the complexity of the urban Aboriginal community and how it ought to be governed. It also conceives of urban Aboriginal governments as “community of interests” governments. The urban site, then, is seen as a site of Aboriginal governance, clearly refuting the idea that “aboriginality” and “urban” are inconsistent. By 1996, in the words of the RCAP, “urban” had become “the framework through which an individual approaches all issues” (Vol. 4, 2), and more importantly, a distinct framework or perspective through which one sees and experiences the world.

Barron and Garcea (*Urban Indian Reserves: Forging New Relationships in Saskatchewan*, 1999) examine a relatively new phenomenon: urban Indian reserves. The urban is seen as a site of opportunity for reserve-based governments. They are sites of economic development that allow for the harvesting of urban wealth for reserve purposes. In an interesting twist, reserves that were seen as holding sites for Indians (until they died or were assimilated) are now seen as ways of breathing life into small towns by attracting industry and commerce through the establishment of urban Aboriginal sites. It is now the cities that are demonstrating lack.

The movement of Indians to cities was first brought to public attention through the *Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada*, commonly known as the *Hawthorn Report* (1966), and the early investigations of anthropologists and sociologists. The encounter with the urban was seen as disagreeable to Aboriginal peoples, and in some sense, inconsistent with commonly held notions of aboriginality. Forty years later, the landscape has changed and Aboriginal peoples are starting to be seen as contributing to the vitality of cities. The RCAP final report argues that Aboriginal peoples and their communities are important to the health and vibrancy of Canadian cities (Vol. 4, 521). As Hawthorn states: “The Indian does not come empty handed to the modern situation” (10).

The research on urban Aboriginal peoples of the early twenty-first century is moving away from the study of lack. It is now starting to focus on urban communities and the issues related to the development of healthy communities that can

foster and support individual wellness and success, as well as cultural retention and transformation. While the deficit/Indian problem paradigm is still dominant, it has started to be complemented by research conducted using ideas from Indigenous knowledge. This new research paradigm analyzes urban landscapes using the central notions of relationship and community, as well as balance and wellness. Indigenous knowledge research requires an acknowledgement of the positive as well as the negative.

In *Not Strangers in These Parts* (2003), Newhouse and Peters remark that “city life is now an integral component of Aboriginal peoples’ lives in Canada” (5). They describe the wide-ranging set of urban institutions developed over the last few decades to help Aboriginal peoples build and live good lives in cities. The suggestion is that urban Aboriginal communities are here to stay, and have established a foundational set of institutions (originally developed to aid in the transition from rural to urban life) that now build relationships with the larger metropolitan communities and focus on urban wellness. Newhouse and Peters “read the literature as one of determination and strength in the face of adversity and challenge. Urban Aboriginal peoples have not sat back and waited for solutions” (12).

The *Final Report of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force* (2007), a joint research project of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association, and the Ontario Native Women’s Association, updates the final report of the 1981 Ontario Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in the Urban Setting. It describes an emerging urban Aboriginal middle class and the need for the development of a new set of cultural/educational institutions to serve them. At the same time, it demonstrates the need for the continued effort to relieve poverty, improve education levels, improve labour force participation (both in quantity and quality), reduce discrimination and prejudice, recognize Aboriginal rights, support families, and build healthy communities.

The federal government, through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) and the University of Western Ontario, sponsored two large public policy research forums on Aboriginal issues in 2002 and 2006. The success and high attendance of these conferences led to a third. In 2009, the Aboriginal Policy Research Conference was jointly hosted by the National Association of Friendship Centres, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the University of Western Ontario. The goal of the conference was to highlight research on Aboriginal peoples in urban centres. The papers published in *Aboriginal Policy Research, Volume VIII: Exploring the Urban Landscape* discuss issues of urban Aboriginal governance, service delivery, and social justice. The volume describes an urban landscape in which urban Aboriginal leaders are working in partnership with local urban organizations and governments to build good lives. The reality of a long-term and continued urban presence is taken for granted, and Aboriginal peoples are presented both as problems (public policy research requires a problem to be solved or a gap to be filled) and as people actively working to solve the problems.

While policy gaps are important, so are aspirations. In our view, good public policy should also be based upon aspirations and goals. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) (Environics 2010)—the first major national study of urban Aboriginal life, experiences, and aspirations—focused not on the past, but on the future. The study asked respondents about their hopes for the future, their definitions of success, and how they see themselves in relation to their communities. Environics found, based on its survey of 2,600 urban Aboriginal individuals, that the vast majority considered the city their home, they liked living in their city, and they seek to make a positive difference there. Most felt that they belonged to an urban Aboriginal community that had a strong sense of cultural vitality and that cultural communities had become stronger in the last five years. As a result, many were confident of their ability to maintain a cultural identity in the city. The concept of a good life was based upon family and a balanced work/home life. Urban Aboriginal residents aspired to a good life—a good job, a successful career, and a degree of financial independence. Higher education was seen as a route to this life, and as providing a better understanding of their heritage and culture. At the same time, all study members reported that they experienced prejudice and discrimination because of their identity as an Aboriginal person. All expressed determination to continue to reside in their homes despite encountering these difficult attitudes and behaviours. They were not going to let themselves be driven away as a result of others' behaviour. The UAPS has found

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples living within our cities who are striving towards better education, healthier family life, and strengthening their cultures and traditions. The urban Aboriginal experience in Canada's cities is that there is no contradiction between success, power and knowledge in "mainstream" society, and a strong First Nations, Métis or Inuit culture. On the contrary, urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada's cities are today proving that these are mutually reinforcing. (Environics 2010, 10)

The *Final Report of the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project* (2011) describes the emergence of urban Aboriginal communities and institutions in Toronto over the last twenty years: "A central theme...is that Aboriginal people in Toronto are working to create a viable and healthy urban community, a community based, to a large degree, on a unique expression of urban Aboriginal culture" (364). These findings reinforce the aspirations and experiences identified by the UAPS. The researchers also identified the challenge of meeting a research goal of "present(ing) a balance between recognizing the needs of a significant number of Aboriginal people who are experiencing challenges in creating a successful life in the city, on the one hand, without painting an unhelpful negative representation suggesting that all Aboriginal people are poor or experience problems" (363). It also states that "Aboriginal people in Toronto are in a 'transition' period of urbanization" (365).

In spite of these changes and developments in thinking and approaches to research, the tendency to focus on what is deficient or lacking in Aboriginal people and their communities can be difficult to overcome. *First Nations in the Twenty-First Century* (Frideres 2011), a text intended for use in university-level courses, ignores the demographic reality of the Aboriginal population and does not identify urban Aboriginal peoples as part of the Aboriginal landscape. Rather, it suggests that a back-to-the-reserve movement over the next decade will see a decrease in the size of the urban Aboriginal population.

While many professionals continue to apply the deficit model when referring to Aboriginal peoples, the Fostering Biimaadiziwin Conference offered an alternative approach. Together, scholars, researchers, urban Aboriginal community members, and policy practitioners offered a positive platform from which to discuss the successes of our urban Aboriginal community. Of course, the challenges encountered cannot be removed from the discussion, but in reframing urban Aboriginal life as progressive rather than insufficient, we can challenge the long-standing reliance on the deficit model. Each of the following papers offers its own view as to how *mino-biimaadiziwin* is enacted in the urban Aboriginal community.

The Papers

The chapters in this book cover the breadth of important policy issues confronting urban Aboriginal people, and the research being undertaken to address these issues. They explore and explain the urban Aboriginal situation in such areas as arts and cultural sovereignty, identity, self-determination, social capital, education, and Aboriginal world views. The contributors are renowned academics, graduate students, policy practitioners, and community professionals.

In **Chapter 1**, Vivien Carli provides a brief overview of some of the experiences of Indigenous people and communities in cities. She outlines the effect that urbanization and the governance of cities have on the safety and well-being of these communities, while keeping in mind the unique experiences of Indigenous people living in urban areas. This chapter explores the four factors that urban governance models deem pertinent to improving safety and well-being: inclusion, participation, cultural match, and partnerships. It also highlights the challenges and opportunities of urban life—from the growing disparities between urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, to the issue of rights and citizenship, to promising national and international practices and partnerships that aim to improve the standard of living, make cities safer, and enliven the urban landscape for the benefit of Indigenous peoples.

In **Chapter 2**, Adrian Foster describes how Toronto is now a profoundly different place than it was during the previous four decades. Cultural change has permeated society at every level, and the arts have been a crucial locus for this change, simultaneously fostering and reflecting the growth of the society as a whole. Aboriginal people have been involved in this development throughout.

Foster traces their participation in, and contribution to, these changes, focusing on artist-run organizations as both venues and allies in the process of change.

In **Chapter 3**, Joanne Heritz assesses how urban Aboriginal peoples in Toronto are involved in building their Aboriginal communities in the city, despite the historical, jurisdictional, and socio-economic challenges they are confronted with. Commencing with an interpretation of *biimaadiziwin*, the good life, the chapter discusses Salée's understanding of quality of life and its incorporation into public policy in Canada. Self-determination is then conceptualized within the context of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to capture its attainment of the good life. Based on preliminary research findings, Heritz then identifies selected organizations that serve the city's Aboriginal community and are self-determining in their practices, such as Native Child and Family Services of Toronto and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto. The conclusion assesses the movement toward self-determination in the Aboriginal community in Toronto.

In **Chapter 4**, by focusing on the specific issue of housing in two case-study cities (Edmonton and Winnipeg), J. D. Crookshanks demonstrates how urban Aboriginal self-governance is currently taking place. The chapter addresses how urban Aboriginal people describe the good life, by seeking to understand what they wish to see in terms of good housing in the city. Crookshanks explores how these goals can be met, not just through government programming, policies, and services, but through normative approaches to urban Aboriginal self-governance.

In **Chapter 5**, Rochelle R. Côté demonstrates how an increasingly important focus of Aboriginal communities across Canada has become economic development as a way of gaining independence, encouraging prosperity, and fostering opportunity. The entrepreneurial ventures of Aboriginal people are an important driver of economic prosperity. Recent data suggests that since 1996, Aboriginal entrepreneurship has continued to grow at a rate nine times the pace of the general population in Canada (Statistics Canada 2006). Yet, even with this rapid growth, many business fail. Past research has focused primarily on the importance of adequate funding and educational background to entrepreneurial success. Recent work, however, has determined that a third mechanism, social capital, provides advantages over and above money and education; in other words, who you know matters. Drawing on a study of eighty entrepreneurs living and/or doing business in Toronto, this chapter offers a rich narrative of Aboriginal entrepreneurship in an urban context. Incorporating an analysis of social capital alongside social background predictors and participation in voluntary associations, it aims to provide a broad overview of factors that affect performance in Toronto's marketplace, demonstrating the importance of the composition of one's networks.

What can be learned from current Aboriginal community practices to help foster *mitho-pimatisiwin* for elderly people who are transitioning between their home communities and urban areas? **Chapter 6**, by Bonita Beatty and Arnette Weber-Beeds, examines elderly care programs and the experiences of the elderly through the shared caregiving approach developed by the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation

(PBCN) Health Services organization in northern Saskatchewan. It suggests that the PBCN elderly health care model and its strategic coordination of programs and services among family, leadership, and health professionals can help inform the broader policy and research areas of Aboriginal aging and urban elderly care.

In **Chapter 7**, Jennifer Brant explores Aboriginal women's access to and success within universities through an examination of Aboriginal women's educational narratives, along with input from key service providers from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. This research was implemented through the Wildfire Research Method, an Indigenous research method that involves an Aboriginal elder and is guided by spirituality and ceremony. This approach allowed participants to engage in a consensus-based vision of accessible education that honours the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical elements necessary for the success of Aboriginal women in university. This study positions Aboriginal women as agents of social change by allowing them to define their own needs and offer viable solutions to those needs. Further, it connects service providers from the many disconnected sectors that implicate Aboriginal women's education access. By drawing on the participants' narratives, recommendations for culturally responsive programming are put forth.

In **Chapter 8**, Patricia O'Reilly and Thomas Fleming focus on police investigative failures in the Robert Pickton serial murder case, with respect to the Aboriginal women victims of his crimes; the treatment of the families of these victims by investigators and government during and after the discovery of multiple bodies at the Pickton farm; and the aftermath of the crimes, specifically the value, or lack of value, of a public inquiry into the disappearances and deaths of the women. The chapter develops a critical analysis of the investigative failures, linking them to the status of many of the victims as Aboriginal women and sex trade workers. The authors argue for more informed approaches to dealing with serial murder victims and their families, which recognize the vulnerability of Aboriginal women in the urban context and the unique nature of dealing with Aboriginal peoples.

In **Chapter 9**, Cyndy Baskin, Bela McPherson, and Carol Strike depict how many pregnant and/or parenting Aboriginal women experience profound and intersecting histories of violence, sexual and physical abuse, mental health challenges, incarceration, poor socio-economic standing, involvement with the child welfare system, stigma, racism, and struggles with identity. Their relationships with health and social services are often punctuated by experiences of racism and oppression. The authors acknowledge that more research pertaining to the experiences, treatment needs, outcomes, and/or prevalence of Aboriginal women who are maternal substance users is needed. Culturally specific programs designed to eliminate negative experiences and promote Aboriginal culture are believed to be essential to the healing of Aboriginal women who struggle with maternal substance use. The goal of this chapter is to examine the relationships that Aboriginal women with drug and alcohol problems have with substance abuse treatment providers and child welfare services, and to examine how collaboration might be promoted.

In **Chapter 10**, Jean-Luc Ratel explores the contributions of Aboriginal students in Quebec to the development of well-being among Aboriginal people. The four cases presented illustrate that contributions to well-being can take place in the community of belonging, in other communities and nations, or in an urban area. This chapter demonstrates that universities can participate in developing well-being by acting as springboards for Aboriginal students, allowing them to establish or continue their own personal involvement in their community or elsewhere.

Chapter 11 by Leslie King outlines some of the more recent changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, and their effect on the *R. v. Gladue* decision. This includes the development of Gladue courts in Toronto, and the opportunity for Aboriginal people who have been convicted of criminal offences to tell their stories through the writing of Gladue reports. King shares his understanding of the lifelong process towards “the good life” of *mino-biimaadiziwin* and suggests that by sharing their stories, convicted criminals can begin to take steps along this path.

Kevin FitzMaurice, Don McCaskill, and Jaime Cidro provide a summary of some key findings of the 2011 Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) in **Chapter 12**. As the largest and most comprehensive study of Aboriginal people in Toronto to date, TARP provides important information about the current situation, aspirations, and challenges of Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto Area. As a community-based study, the research was overseen from start to finish by representatives of the Toronto Aboriginal community; it was sponsored by the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council; and all aspects of the research, from choosing the research topics to vetting the final report, were overseen by the TARP Research Steering Committee. An overall theme of this research is that Aboriginal people in Toronto are working to create a healthy and sustainable urban community, a community based, to a large degree, on unique expressions of urban Aboriginal culture. Additional key themes that emerged include the persistence of widespread poverty and related social challenges, in spite of improvements in education, employment, and income levels and a growing Aboriginal middle class; the pervasiveness of racism against Aboriginal people in Toronto, as well as diverse forms of discrimination being expressed within the Aboriginal community; the challenges associated with Aboriginal community building; and the importance of Aboriginal cultures and the presence of a vibrant Aboriginal arts scene in Toronto.

We hope the papers in this volume, selected from those presented at the February 2011 Fostering Biimaadiziwin Conference, will do much to stimulate new studies of urban Aboriginal peoples, studies that will examine the joys, frustrations, rewards, and challenges of living good lives as Aboriginal peoples in Canada’s cities and towns.

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